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UNDER THE LAMP

—WITH—

"BEN HOPE"

FIFTY CENTS A COPY

BY

JAMES STANHOPE LOVE

"SHUT-IN"

GAFFNEY, S. C.
THE GAFFNEY LEDGER
MCMXI

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JAN - 1912

DEDICATION.

To the many kind, loving friends who have stood by me so faithfully, loved me so well, and assisted me so unselfishly, this volume is dedicated. Each and every one of them will ever be held in grateful memory by me.

Dear Unknown Friend:

This book is sent to you for this reason, to-wit: When you shall have read it, I believe that you will desire to pay for a copy. Therefore, please let me hear from you. If you wish, you can send me fifty cents; otherwise, please return the book. I make this offer to each one of my unknown readers. I am a cripple, having never been able to walk a step. I have educated myself, and have never attended school a day.

Yours truly,

Stanhope Love.

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Under the Lamp with "Ben Hope"

FOREWORD.

Somehow or other (and I scarcely know how or why, only I know that I want to do it,) I have for a long time desired to write a book of short stories, character sketches, and some of my own real experiences in life. Out here in this quiet rural community, where I live, work, and "enjoy life," many strange scenes, quaint characters, curious incidents, silent tragedies, and real struggles in life have come under my observation; and I have been seized with the idea that I can, perhaps, record all of these for the entertainment of those who are to come after me. I sincerely believe that if they could all be written just as they are, and by one who knows them to be, they would constitute an interesting addition to the rustic literature of our fair land.

I do not claim to be able to write up these stories in as worthy, brilliant and up-to-date a manner as it, perhaps, should be done; I am, nevertheless, confident of my own ability to do the work in some way. Therefore, I would make this request of those who make it their business to pass judgment upon the literature of the world: Most austere, learned, and profound Critic, when you have read these stories over in a very careful and sympathetic (?) fashion, won't you please be tolerant of all my errors? I know that you are at once the friend, the enemy, and—the despair, of every one who may, perchance, dare to aspire to authorship;—but, nevertheless, I'm not afraid of you! I am a self-educated "knight of the pen;" and I, therefore

and somehow, believe that all of my mistakes will be kindly excused, and overlooked, by every one of my readers.
November 12th, 1909.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Since the foregoing was written, one day last autumn, I have decided to say a few more words of a personal nature. I know that I am only a poor, weak human being. But whenever I look out upon my fellow-creatures, see all of their mistakes and little failings of everything and everybody, I am encouraged to continue on in my own way.

. . . . . The Spirit of Love never dies.

These stories are, for the most part, the creations of my own fancy.

JAMES STANHOPE LOVE.

February 15th, 1910.

"DREAMY-EYES."

I remember, I remember! Yes; I remember "Dreamy-Eyes." For was it not she who first stirred to life, within my breast, the great passion called love? That was the happiest hour of my life, and it will never pass away from my memory.

One night, many years ago, several of the young people, who then lived near us, assembled in our home for a few short hours of fun, pleasure and merry-making. It was winter-time, they were attending school, and I was just a lonely crippled boy; therefore it often happened that we had such little parties in our home, in order to give me some enjoyment, as well as to also pass away the long winter evenings as pleasantly for all of us as we could.

Some one said, "Let's sing and play one of our little ring plays that we practice at school." So they formed a circle, round two members of the party, by "catching hands," as they expressed it; and then they "marched round the ring," singing as they went.

I had known "Dreamy-Eyes" for a long time, although I was not aware that she possessed such a superbly sweet, tender, musical voice until that night. And then and there I fell in love with that voice, those dreamy eyes, and their owner. I believe it was the first time that I had ever really experienced the feeling called love, and I went to bed happier that night than I had ever been before in my life.

Time moved on, things changed in our neighborhood, and I continued to grow in knowledge,—as well as in years. During the next two years or more, I saw "Dreamy-Eyes" pretty often, considering the fact of my seclusion. I sel-

dom visited any in those days, as I was generally too weak, physically, to do so. Therefore I remained at home most of my time, reading, studying and writing. But since she visited us occasionally, I was, somehow, satisfied. I do not know whether she was ever aware of my love for her or not, as I never told her about it. I know, however, that she always showed much kindness to, and consideration for me, afflicted and lonely as I was then.

I visited her home one afternoon in the sweet summertime and I certainly enjoyed my visit very much. As always before she had been, she was modest and kind in her own simple way. I sat and looked at her. I thought I had never before seen her so beautiful. Her skin was clear and fair; her eyes were of a light blue color, with not a thing to mar their perfect beauty; and her whole aspect was one of grace and loveliness. It was only such a loveliness as Nature alone can give, too; which made it all "literally worth a king's ransom," in my eyes, I thought. But somehow the ardor of my first passion had, strangely enough, become quite indifferent, considering what it had been before. I still loved her, it was true; yet, I heard the news of her engagement without feeling the slightest pang of jealousy, or anything remotely pertaining to it. Nevertheless, I thought the expression of her countenance was even more heavenly, in my sight that afternoon, than usual,—if that were possible.

I saw her only one more time, if I remember correctly, before her marriage to the man of her choice. And so not long after this she was united, in the holy bonds of matrimony, to a fellow who seemed very fond of her, to say no more. I saw her only twice after that, as she departed for a different neighborhood, with her husband, there to make

her future home. I still loved her, too; and my memory of her has, ever since, been one of my dearest, sweetest, most hallowed treasures. (It was only last night that I went to sleep "dreaming" of those pleasant days, long ago departed from me.)

Since that sweet time, I have found consolation elsewhere; but I still love to think about "Dreamy-Eyes." And I often do.

One day, as I was seated at my desk writing, some one suddenly darkened my door. Hastily looking up, I saw—"Dreamy-Eyes," with her child, a pretty little boy! My heart did not beat a lively tattoo within me, altho' I found her as beautiful as ever and gave her my hand, in signal of welcome, as gladly as I ever gave it to any one. I was alone at the time, and as she seated herself I could not help feeling rather strange for a moment. "What might have been, if I had only"—I thought. But it would avail me nothing, now, to indulge in vain thoughts.

Soon after this, she sank under the burdens of life,—for she had married quite young,—and became sick. She felt, from the first, that it was her last illness; so she talked to all of her loved ones. She told them all to meet her in Heaven, as she was going thither herself. And I believe she did.

Gentle reader, this is a true story, and I have written it just as it has formed itself in my mind. "Dreamy-Eyes" did really live right near my home once, and I was personally acquainted with her family. And it is also true that I loved her; but, nevertheless, my love for her returned to my own heart quite as calmly, at the proper time, as it had passionately gone out to her before. I can of a truth say yet, however, that nothing and nobody, either

intimately or remotely connected with her, shall ever be objects of indifference to me.

Hoping that this little story has not been written in vain, that every one of my readers will enjoy it, that there may be at least a few who will be benefited by reading it, and that Heaven will continue to bless my devoted efforts, I will close for today.

THE GUITARIST.

Once, in the sweet long ago, there lived, right near my home, a gentle girl who sang and played on the guitar, very beautifully. She was, I believe, the sweetest guitarist that I have ever heard perform on that sublimest of all instruments (when played by girlish fingers!), and I've heard many. Possessed of a natural talent for music, she was indeed an excellent performer on either banjo, guitar, or organ. And since music has always been one of my delights, as it were, she often came to my home to play and sing for me. Some of the songs which she sang were sad and sweet, while others were of a lighter turn. Hymns, songs, and "just any old thing" made sweet music when she played them, however; and I have sat for hours at a time listening to her. Some of the deepest emotions of my soul were stirred in a manner that I am not likely ever to forget, by my old-time guitarist-friend. But changes must of necessity come, therefore it came to pass, after a few short years, that I ceased to see her any more; as of old I had been accustomed to fondly watching for her, I now managed to pass my time away as pleasantly as I could without her. I visited her home only once while she lived in my home-neighborhood. It was Christmas and very

cold, but I enjoyed my day's visit immensely. (Nevertheless, I had to suffer, from the effects of thus exposing myself, for a week afterward. I believe that was the first time that I had ever had toothache, and oh dear! how I suffered. Yet, Heaven was kind, and I was well once more, after many weary days.)

The desire to improve myself, my condition, and to make my surroundings more congenial to the tastes of a refined and cultured mind, dates from the days of my sweet guitarist, I believe; for well do I remember the great thoughts which would pass through my mind when she was playing her best for me, as she often did.

I remember the last summer that we had her with us almost as vividly as if it were only yesterday, and I believe it was the sweetest summer-time that I ever spent. She came often to our home; for it was the last year that her family intended to spend in old "Buckhorn." The next year, therefore, they all departed for another neighborhood. I saw her several times since, but somehow she never again seemed just like the guitarist of my boyhood days.

The years swept onward in their ever-restless course, and by and by the news reached me that my guitarist had entered "the state of double blessedness;" therefore I truly felt, then, that I should never see my guitarist any more in the same role in which she always used to appear.

But, many thanks, my noble friend, for all that you ever did for me. You came into my life just at the proper time to inspire me with a love for the beautiful in everything and everybody, and it has never left me. You did go out of my life; but your gentle influence still lives within my breast as sweetly as ever. Many times, since those happy

days, have I sinned and suffered. But, Heaven be praised! my soul has at last been filled with a Light which shall never die I can now very plainly see that the Father has blessed everything to my good, and even as I write I am satisfied with my portion in life. Since I became a man, I have made other sweet friends, who rejoice sincerely to see my progressive march toward better things; and I now know what it is to live. Yet, even in my own enlightened vision of to-day, not one appears more lovely than "Dreamy-Eyes" and "The Guitarist."

How very deceptive one's memory can be, sometimes! After writing and writing, I find, on looking over my manuscript, that I have, unintentionally, omitted parts of my two preceding stories. I had intended "telling it all," as local parlance expresses it; but since that seems to be an impossible task with me, will only add, that I trust my readers can imagine, for themselves, all that seems lacking in my book. A friend of mine had the honor and pleasure of witnessing the marriage of "Dreamy-Eyes," which happened so long ago that it's almost like a dream now; and he thought her "the prettiest sight he had ever seen." But the most beautiful flowers must, always and inevitably, wither the soonest. And it was only the other day that I received a letter from "The Guitarist." It came like a breath from the far long ago, too; for as I read her epistle I could nearly imagine that she was near me once more, with her guitar.

"DREAMING."

I am a dreamer, a day-dreamer of dreams. I have, at night, had many absured dreams; none of which I ever

expect to come to be a reality, because of their very absurdity. But it is about my day-dreams I wish especially to speak in this little sketch; for it is the latter which always count for something in this life. It's not those fleeting night-time visions, which all of us see at one time or another, that help in any way to make life better for the human beings of this world—save in a few rare cases, when they reveal to us just a passing glimpse, as it were, of the glories of the other world. Some—and they are not a few—pretend to a disbelief in all dreams. Nevertheless, I'm not of those who, because their eyes are blinded by ignorance and prejudice and fear, claim that they can behold nothing whatsoever in dreams; neither am I wholly given up to a belief in dreams. So hither we go with my "dreams"

I am dreaming to-day. I dream of a better time to come. It is good with me now, of course and to be sure; but there is always room for improvement in everything. I dream of the time, which I am certain will come, when I shall have acquired the sort of an education my heart yearns for; when I shall have written books; when I shall have become enshrined in the hearts of my countrymen; when all of my devoted and unselfish labors will be crowned with success.

I dream of the happy day when I may . . . have the satisfaction of giving my own dear mother a rest from a life-time of devoted labor for those to whom she is very good; when I may one day have a magnificent home of my own; . . . and when all things may work out to the good of those who love God. . . . I have very high ideals.

I dream of the day when I may be known over all the

South; when people will have read my message to them; when it might be said of me that I did the best I could with whatever talents God gave me; when my life and my work shall be known and understood by every one; . . . . And now, O Father! hear my humble prayer. Permit me, I entreat Thee, to enjoy life properly while it lasts. Give me strength to labor and to wait for Thee. Give me courage to say, Thy will be done. Help me to live as I should, and as Thou wouldst have me live. Take not away from me the one joy of my life—Thy love for me. Comfort me always, and in the darkest hour of suffering forsake me not, O Father of Heaven and Earth! . . .

Like dear old Charles Dickens, I will digress from the main thread of my subject, occasionally, as I go along. Somehow, digressing seems to be my worst fault. Nevertheless, I love to rove about from place to place, telling a little here and a little there, filling up the notches, as it were. I was reading over all of my own personal correspondence this week; and as I read and pondered some of my old letters it was with many and various feelings and emotions that I drew out and read a letter from New Hampshire, which my unknown and far-away friend, Mr. M. A. J. Freeman, wrote to me years ago. In it he advised me not to become too ambitious, but compose myself and endeavor to be contented. He wished me to continue my writing and studying, and to do so in a happy manner. He also advised me to write about the simple things of every day life, as such descriptive and reminiscent sketches always carry us back to the things which we have all known and loved.

I have labored over my manuscript many days. Sometimes I am almost discouraged, and even think of des-

troying a part or all of that which is already written, and give up the idea of composing such a book as this is intended to be. But somehow I seem to be led on by a power stronger than my own weakness; for still my work continues from day to day. What my brain has created, my hand has reduced to writing; and so I have not the heart to destroy it I know that others can scarcely see my work in the same light that I see it, love it as I have loved it, understand it so well as I do, and feel as deeply over it as it is possible for only the author, who has studied, prayed and labored for so long, to feel. In my own enthusiasm, however, I often forget that this is so; and will imagine that everybody understands and loves my writings as well as I love them myself. For every person living sees, and understands, in his own peculiar way,—and through his own eye-glasses.

AT TWENTY-THREE.

"WHAT LIFE MEANS TO ME."

A STUDY OF LIFE AS IT REALLY IS.

I.—What do I live for, and what does life mean to me? I believe that I live because I love this life in the way that God intended me to love it, and because it means all that is noble and true and good to me, now and forevermore.

Here I sit, a poverty-stricken, lonely, afflicted man. I cannot walk a step. . . . I am poor in this world's goods, and have nothing except a mere living. I have a tender, loving, sympathetic heart, and an inexpressible longing for something or other—I know not what. (I call this mournful feeling my "aching void;" for no other name

that I can think of, suits it so well. And fain would I tell all about that "aching void" right here, but I cannot. 'Tis a subject too profound for proper and intelligent expression).

Nevertheless, I enjoy life very much. I love it, truly and devotedly. I believe I like it just for its own dear sake. Although I am afflicted, and my life is much limited in its scope thereby, still I have many beautiful things to live for. And therefore I always strive to enjoy and employ each day as it comes, just as happily as I can. A chapter from the Words of Life, a prayer for guidance, then the day's work—reading, studying and writing. That is my rule.

I love this life, just for the sake of living and hoping for better things and times. I believe that expresses it aptly and concisely; for if I did not sincerely believe that the morrow will always be an improvement on to-day, life would lose half of its charm for me. My "heart's desire" would then cease to be the one inspiration of my pen.

If one does not manage to find, and enjoy, the blessings of to-day, the future is not likely ever to be any better; therefore I always strive to live in to-day,—allowing the future to take care of itself. I have a strong, active, and fertile intellect, my mind is fresh and vigorous, my heart is tender and loving and sympathetic, I have hope and faith in the future, and I have courage to do and to dare for the sake of the right as I understand it. I love beauty in all things, and can always manage to see it everywhere. I have much around me to make me happy and satisfied, and I know that I do what I can to see it, enjoy it, and profit by it.

Every one knows what struggles and trials and temptations we have, in a general way; but only those who are

afflicted as I am, who have suffered as I have suffered, who have yearned as I have yearned, who have been cared for by tender hands because of affliction, and who have had to submit quietly to so many unpleasant things, will ever know just what it means to be a "shut-in." Ignorance, poverty, ill health and affliction, the loss of friends, and the inability to do all that one longs to do, are bad enough. . . .

I believe I know what life might be to me, one day. I somehow feel that it will, guided and directed by the Father, always be good. I am certain that I shall never want for the necessities of life, and that there will be those around me to minister to my needs as long as I live. I feel sure that I have many true friends, who wish me well in all things. I am satisfied that in somebody's heart I am enthroned as an ideal of human pluck and endeavor. I have encouragement and inspiration to labor on.

I am loved by my friends. The little children all seem to take a sort of kindly interest in me. (Bless their little hearts! I love them. Time was, when I, in my boyish timidness, "didn't care much for 'em," and people laughed at me because of it). The boys and girls of my acquaintance do what they can for me. They all show, by their little acts of kindness, just how deeply they sympathize with me. To them, it seems so sad for one to be afflicted as I am; and they are willing to divide their little joys with me,—but never their sorrows. I have many unknown friends, too, who would do anything in their power for me. I have one, especially, who understands me. I have never seen her, have never taken her hand in mine, have never looked into the depths of her calm, serene, soulful eyes; nevertheless, I know that she is a friend, a friend "tried and true."

I have my books, my work, my love of literature, my flowers, the devotion of those around me, my inspiration, the health-giving climate of Dixie, our beautiful Southern scenes and landscapes, and my music, to make life pleasant for me. And it is pleasant!

I have studied life and human nature from several points of view I have, literally speaking, reached all the way from the cradle to the grave in my range of thought on the subject. I have drunk from the fountains of love and romance; dreamed of the joys of soft eyes, tender hands and summer moonlight; talked soberly with old age on the vanities and follies of life, and endeavored to study every phase of human nature. I have done this because I could not do otherwise, and because I wished to learn from experience.

I know what it is to be bashful and ill-natured, and have been "almost teased to death" many times in my life. I know what it means to be slighted and snubbed and unnoticed, and many a time have I had my ideals crushed to the earth, before my very eyes, by ruthless, thoughtless, heedless, ignorant people. But it all went for nothing; as I know not the meaning of failure, and purpose never to give up. I will fight the battle of life, in my way, as fast and as furiously as I can while my life lasts.

I have looked upon the babe in the cradle, the timid couple under the mistletoe, and the heroic struggle of two young hearts "trying to make a living;" and have been impressed with the innocence, helplessness, hope, joy and—the sorrow —of it all And when I contemplate all of these things, I am convinced that there is, indeed, no unbelief; for even the tiny seed that falls to the earth almost believes that it shall one day grow into a mighty tree.

I have seen the young mother's eyes shine with the glorious light of love over her first-born; and have seen her again bowed down in sorrow at the side of her dead darling —beautiful even in death. I have heard and seen the pathetic cries and airs of the motherless and the fatherless. . . . Ah! gentle readers, I know all about the pathetic side of life,—aside from mere physical affliction.

II—There are those who regard my views of life as almost nothing. In their own way, they would discourage me, if they could, without knowing it. They laugh at me because I am a Populist, because I believe in the doctrine of "Equal rights to all, special privileges to none;" because "Tom Watson" is my ideal man, because I have faith enough in humanity to believe that there can, occasionally, be such a thing as honesty in politics; and because they think that I am only an inexperienced idealist. I am not, however, cast down by anything whatsoever.

There are some who, in their own thoughtless fashion, would unwittingly compel me to believe that there is no good in humanity. . . . And it is then that I am saddest and feel my "aching void" most keenly.

There are those who seem jealous of me. In their own circumscribed outlook on life, they simply cannot understand just how one of my very limited opportunities can manage to accomplish anything really worth while. To their uneducated minds, I am somewhat of a wonder. But be it recorded in justice to them, that not one of them has ever done anything to hinder my progress upward and onward. They have only given me a small measure of ridicule: a thing which has been of inestimable worth to me. For has it not kindled the fire of an ambition in my breast which will never die? Has it not nerved me to every effort

of which I am capable? Has it not been the one thing most needful for me? Flattery, without criticism, often does untold harm to one by closing his vision to those things which every one must see and learn, in order to be wise.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

III.—I desire always to be a free man, to be permitted to speak the truth, and never to be silenced by any means when I know that I ought to speak: I purpose to "let myself go" all the time. I desire to give the world my views on life, in order that it might profit by the lesson I am striving to teach—the achievements of one crippled boy who has really struggled against almost impossible and insuperable difficulties. I desire the world one day to know what my ideals are, and I intend to labor always in support of them. . . .

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

I am, nevertheless and notwithstanding, really a happy man at twenty-three.

IN THE "SEAS OF MEMORY."

What is memory? What is it that fills our minds as sweetly, as beautifully, as water fills the brook, as flowers perfume the atmosphere, as the summer birds enliven the warm days, or as dew refreshes the night air? What constitutes our most useful, hallowed, and beautiful of treasures? What makes us, by turns, sad and regretful, glad and happy, humorous and philosophical? What is our constant companion always, bringing ever before us scenes of beauty, light, darkness, and happiness? What is it that enables us to commune with the far-distant past? Time is fleeting, and we are hard-pressed to keep up, all our days. Ah! what a fine, noble thing memory is!

UNDER THE LAMP WITH "BEN HOPE."

All of us have our times of depression, hours of weariness, days of loneliness. There are, in fact, times in our lives that we are very sad. We hardly know why, either; it just seems as if we were brooding over some mysterious tragedy. But the Words of Life eternal, and grand, sweet Memory, never fail to perform their offices for us.

Happy days of the past, old associations, far-off dreams, boyhood pleasures and all that used to be good to us, are still with us in memory. We can see them even after we are nearing the end of life's journey. They never leave us, either, these memories; for the Father has so willed that we can have them always—if we but try. The mind never dies; and the more knowledge that we acquire, therefore, the better. I believe that we can so live as always to be young, youthful, and buoyant, if we will. It is peculiarly sad to see so many "growing old before their time," and yet that is an every day occurrence with just numbers of human beings Why not enter the seas of Memory and say, "Come, eternal Spring, come and reign in my heart forevermore! I need thee, and I must have thee!"

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

. . I have labored to acquire learning sufficient to render me capable of writing, so long and so hard, that this has come to be a part of my very life. The preceding scraps truly contain much of my very soul. . . .

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Gentle reader, read in these pages the wonderful story of my life, my work, my hopes, my desires, and my aims. In them will be found many a heart throb, many a hope deferred, and many heartfelt longings. This radiant April day, as I write, I am full of hope and joy and happiness.

But after all, the sad, solemn days will inevitably come to each of us at some time in life.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

MY IDEALS.

As I have said before, I have my ideals. I am, to speak precisely, an idealist "to the manner born." There is nothing in this whole wide world that I love half so well as dreaming and idealizing. To me,—in my own poor little world, as it were,—it is nearly all of my life. And when I enter the far-away, dreamy land of my ideals, as I often do in imagination, it is then that I am happiest.

I have had one long hard struggle all of my life. Ah! I could not tell the whole story of it if I would. But, somehow or other, nothing makes me afraid. Reading some of "Tom" Watson's writings has kindled the fires of an ambition in my breast that will never die. I believe it—I know it—I feel it—I realize it! Yet, it is not the sort of ambition which nearly drove Edna Earle, in "St. Elmo," to her own destruction; it is rather, I believe, the kind which always prompts and encourages one to give the world the best that one may have. And so long as my life continues, I have resolved to give the world the best that I have.

There are those who seem to consider my ideals and standards of life too high for mortal man ever to reach. They think that I am too strict . . .; that man is only human and weak and helpless, after all; and that if I were myself differently situated, I might not think as I now think And perhaps that is true, to some extent; but nevertheless, man can live up to my standard. I know this or else I would not cling to my ideals so persistently. I would not love the world so well, neither would I have any hope of

a future life. Something tells me, always, that I am right in clinging fast to my ideals; and in my heart of hearts I know that I am determined to live up to them. God only wants us to recognize His power and mercy and goodness, as we journey through life, in order to fill our souls with calm contentment. He has never, since the fall of mankind, expected us to live without sinning in our own natural ways. That is a self-evident truth.

There are also those who have no ideals; consequently their mode of living, their standards . . ., are not such as to inspire any one with confidence in that which all persons must believe is right. They have no ambition, no lofty yearnings, to rise above their common stations; they are satisfied just to pursue the even tenor of their ways. To them, the "upper crust" of knowledge, the one peculiar charm of books, the intense joy of composing and writing, are just meaningless phrases, that have no fascination for them They find pleasure in the simplest things and ways imaginable. A well-cooked meal, with a pipe afterwards; a funny story, told in the proper manner to amuse; a party, with good lively music and dancing; a pretty girl, and a "buggy and mule;" or a pleasant summer afternoon, spent along the banks of some refreshing stream,—these are what most young people enjoy best of all. But when it is too late many of them realize what a sad failure their lives have been.

There are those who would "just laugh at" my ideals, perhaps; in the mistaken notion that I know nothing about the world and its ways, with its many and various "good things" which a fellow may get if he will try. And this is, perchance, all very true, viewed in a certain light. But I do know that one never has any deeper conception of

what life means to mankind other than that with which the Creator has endued each of us. We know only what we see, feel, hear, learn and understand; that which is out of our lives is out of our knowledge too. We have no means of knowing the hearts of others; therefore I may say that we are, always, guided and directed by a Power beyond the comprehension of man.

There are also those who consider the idealist as a sort of impracticable being, who never amounts to much. To all such careless persons, the dreams of the "professional dreamer" are merely the outpouring of a queer studious man (or woman, as it may be sometimes), who knows nothing of life's joys. To them, the rule is "Eat, Drink and Be Merry!" But alas! many take a course which, they must know, will in the end bring only despair, ruin and destruction. In the very face of two ways (and there are only two in this world) they deliberately take the way through life that inevitably leads to eternal ruin. They do indeed eat, drink and make merry—for a little while. Some stand it longer than others, of course; but sooner or later they all wither from the effects of fast living and idling away their precious hours.

Therefore gentle readers, I am determined to cling to my ideals—irrespective of all things, all persons, and all creeds. They are my life, my very soul; and, with His help, I am satisfied that I am able to maintain as high and exalted a standard as it is possible for any one to maintain. Some may put on a more refined touch to their ideal; but I yield to none in being solid and natural. O, proud world! take not my ideals away from me, for after all, they constitute my sole possession in this life!

I have said that there are some who, it would seem, have

no fixed ideals in life. But, however that may be, I believe that I speak the truth when I claim that each person living has, in his heart of hearts, some conception of what is nearest and dearest to all of our hearts. We all know what we like best, whether we can express it in words or not. And so it has gradully dawned upon my intelligence that, somewhere in my inner self, there is an imaginary creation which I am pleased to call the ideal life, the life worth living, or just any name the reader may choose to give it. (The name thereof makes no material difference: it is the same everywhere).

If there is anything that strikes my fancy with a force which is, at once, convincing, fascinating and irresistible, it is either a childish child, a girlish girl, a manly man, or a womanly woman. Each of them, in their respective periods of life, has a charm that is altogether peculiar to itself. And, in my opinion, the first thing that ever redounds to the good of mankind is the ideal life. That is a thing which is known to exist somewhere, and which many persons in all ages have striven for; but not every one was ever able to attain it.

The ideal life, or the best mode of living, is the one which enables a person to live in peace and happiness. I may not have any money, education, or worldly goods of any sort; I am, perhaps, destitute of even life's necessities. Nevertheless, I can be happy, if the glorious Light and Spirit of Love reign in my heart.

I may be lonely, forsaken and afflicted; I might desire, without ever receiving; I can even wish fervently for that which I know I shall never get, and then not lose sight of my ideal life. (Gentle reader, I speak the truth, as you can see if you will).

The ideal life never grows old, never stops learning, and always sheds radiance in a dark world. It enables one to say, "Whatever is to be will be. I know only the present: I know not the future. No matter what God has purposed to do, I feel that I shall be taken care of. My needs will not be lost sight of by Him. Therefore, I am satisfied to wait on the Lord."

Greed and avarice, meanness and selfishness, have no part, no place, in the ideal life; neither has contrariness. If my soul is contented to-day—why not to-morrow too? Oh! how we need the faith and trust of a little child, in order to live happily.

I have often seen dirty, penniless, illiterate negroes who were, alas! more hopeful of the future than I. In their own circumscribed outlook on life, the world seemed a vast treasure house of new beauties every day. Now and then trouble would, of course, come to all of them; but it never crushed them utterly. Their lives were not, by any means, ideal; but in their simple faith they have taught one man a great lesson. And, to come back to the life worth living, allow me to state, right here, that I believe I have found the real conception of it in the lives of such illustrious characters as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Thomas E. Watson, Frank L. Stanton, Margaret J. Preston, Augusta J. Evans, Mary Chapin Smith, and Mary E. Bryan. I have read some of their works; and I believe that they, and hosts of others of the same school, all possess exalted ideals of life. They know the life worth living.

The ideal life brings all that is good, to mankind; evil never enters it to stay forever. It explores new fields every year, in its incessant search after knowledge. It will wade through a vast amount of trash for one grain of truth. It

always smiles, even though sorrow might have given it one irremediable wound in its journey upward and onward. It will see the best and brightest part of all things, in spite of the evil which they may contain. It is always young, hopeful, and buoyant—calm, serene, and contented. The ideal life is irrepressible.

The ideal life is, therefore, the only one really worth living. It is the only sure way of securing happiness. It is what I desire, next to everything else mentionable, in the world to-day. I am striving hard to attain the soul's wish, too. In fact, the ability to live the life ideal, has been my one supreme desire ever since my soul's awakening.

The ideal man loves the truth, and hates all forms of deceit and falsehood. He early surrenders himself to the lofty yearnings of his inner being, and strive always to do his best. He admires beauty and harmony in all things, and is ever kind and gentle. He is no respecter of persons, but is polite and attentive to all. He is honest: he would rather give than take, always. The ideal man does not meddle or interfere with other persons' affairs in any way; he stands on his own dignity, and allows the world just to "rock along" in its own old way. He is always neat in his attire (except when his work is of the sort which forbids neatness), and has good manners and kind treatment for every one. He has not one face at home, and another abroad. He does not "put on;" he prefers to be natural. He does not lose his temper, and say things just the moment something goes wrong: he thinks before he speaks. He takes no delight in vulgarity, loves nothing that is dark, admires all pure women, loves children, makes his wife his ideal, is a lover always, takes the part of those who are imposed upon, despises not the amusements of young people, lives a

clean life, keeps his house open to the stranger as well as to his neighbor, and endeavors to get all the good out of life there is in it for him. He does not set a very low standard of morality, and then say, "There is no virtue in the world." Surely he would not care to see every woman a prostitute?

The ideal man knows no double life. He enjoys the simple things of life, and always finds his comfort and rest at home. He may not be educated; but if he possess honesty, courage and manliness, he will never want for the one real pleasure of living. In his own way, he can always manage to enjoy life. He is satisfied to spend his days in his present station of life.

The deal man treats his horse as he treats his family—with kindness and consideration. He does not wish those whom he employs or with whom he is employed, to be imposed upon more than himself. Like Roosevelt, he believes in the "Square Deal," and endeavors to live according to it.

I may not know many ideal men, of the sort portrayed above; but I believe in the ideal man, nevertheless. I, myself, am not an ideal man, since I have enough of the Adam in my make-up to render me a very weak personage, sometimes. And, somehow or other, I am constrained to believe that the ideal man does exist—somewhere. It may be only in my imagination, but I cannot believe it is so remote as all that;—for I am certain that the ideal girl is a real, live, tangible something! The ideal woman is also a reality; for I have lived with one ever since I came into the world; a living, breathing, crying atom of humanity. And therefore I cling to the theory that nothing but the higher ideals are really worth while, now and always.

The minister, the doctor, the lawyer, the editor, the schol-

ar, and the author all have, uppermost in their minds always, high ideals; and the higher their ideals, the greater their achievements. That is the rule. And when such men have charge of the government of a people, we have as perfect a government as imperfect human nature can ever devise and successfully administer. But alas! the dreamer and the idealist have no place in our governmnent to-day. The low politicians, and the vulgar rich, just have things according to their own sweet will. Those who would bring us all up, very near the idealist's levil, if they could, are generally relegated to the rear, where they can neither be seen nor heard. Their cries of warning are not heeded now; but one day when God calls a wayward world to a stern reckoning, He will have mercy on all of those who have devoted their lives to the higher ideals. Not one of us can say, even then, that we did right—all the time. But as for me, if I can say, "I did my best; I followed the light,"—I shall be satisfied!

And in conclusion I can of a truth say, on this fair spring morning ideals of every sort surge in my brain. I know what I believe is best, but I cannot express it all now. As the years roll on, I may be permitted to write it out. Anyway, I shall never cease to hope for the realization of my one great, heroic dream. I see the green of the leaves and the light of the day, feel the warmth of the sunlight and the kindness of every one around me; therefore I must believe in higher ideals. I must believe that there exists, somewhere, the ideal life. I realize my own human weakness, but I am encouraged. When I see a little innocent child, I am encouraged and refreshed. Somehow they always make me think of the time when I was a child, not

knowing care or sorrow. So may it be with me always, is my desire

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MY HEART'S DESIRE.

Every person living has a "heart's desire." For many long years I, myself, have felt it in my heart. Somewhere in the unknown realms of mystery, there is something which, I believe, would satisfy me—if I could only attain it. Ever since I was a child, I have dreamed of the day when I should be in better circumstances.

I wish always to be a free man. . . .

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But many great men began poor. Charles Dickens, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas E. Watson are illustrious examples. And by my own efforts, I have managed to improve myself and my surroundings very much. I have labored very, very hard; but the labor of it is nothing, so that I succeed in my determination to make a name and a fortune for myself—so that I realize my heart's desire.

I long to acquire a liberal education, of the sort which has made Watson famous. I would—if I could—wade through oceans of books, if I could thereby become an educated man. I have read an immense amount of trash in the weary course of my reading, but I am not yet satisfied. My thirst for knowledge amounts almost to a mania.

I desire to become well-informed on all subjects, and to meet distinguished personages. I desire to travel, and to "see the world." And sometimes I feel as if I should like to enter politics, and fight valiantly for office, position and influence. I have, indeed, entertained thoughts of one day becoming a leader of men, and leading the hosts of reform.

UNDER THE LAMP WITH "BEN HOPE."

I sometimes desire to conduct a newspaper, in which I would preach a doctrine of love and justice. I even have hopes of one day becoming a famous orator. But not so, any of these My physical affliction effectually forbids it all. . . . .

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I can study and write, and thus create many imaginary characters that will remain with me always. I can assail and master many great, huge subjects, and for the time live so absorbed in them as to forget, for a little while, my great grief and lamentation of spirit. I can attract a circle of many warm friends around me, and perhaps acquire a vast amount of popularity. . . . .

To have some one to love you, trust you, and go through life with you, sharing your joys and sorrows; to have some one—"the dearest one"—to smooth your pillow, to watch by you in your last moments, is almost, if not quite, heaven on earth To have some one to turn to in the evenings, after your day's work is done; and when you are "just too tired for anything," to have her—only her—to illumine your home with good cheer—ah! that is what every true man wants. And when the time to go comes, I somehow believe that his going will be the easier if the one woman takes the vigil by his bedside.

. . . I have deliberately resolved to continue on in my course. And if the world should crush me, with all of my own ideals too, it might find the task just a little more difficult of accomplishing than it would think.

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MY ACHING VOID.

I have received words of encouragement from Mrs.

Mary E. Bryan, Hon. Thomas E. Watson, Rev. H. J. Mills, and many others, and I am very happy because of it all. Nothing passes unnoticed or not appreciated by me. And I have long striven to live in obedience to the Voice within, and I pray always for rest of spirit. But let it pass, for the time I have at last lived to realize some of my fondest dreams. Everywhere I go, people seem to wish me well. I really have nothing to complain of. Not one has been unfaithful to me. The remembrance of old times often makes me sad; but that is natural, I suppose. I have written much along this line, and could write much more. But I won't. My readers may not, perhaps, enjoy so much of my sad, melancholy ruminations.

Nevertheless, I believe I will be pardoned for writing just a few more words, expressing my aching void. My writings are my truest comfort. For I somehow feel a great relief of mind, whenever I write down some of my innermost thoughts. I may never realize my heart's desire; but that will, after all, never really trouble me. I can, if I will, receive consolation from books, inspiration and encouragement from my surroundings, rest and recreation from people, and thus manage to enjoy life all my days. Many times the fight will be hard, but I shall never give up. Friends may forsake me at the most critical time, but I shall not allow that to discourage me. The battle will be the harder for me because I must content myself to fight alone, in a certain sense. But I will be found true to the right, always. South Carolina will never have a truer son than this crippled man! . . . .

THE FIRE.

Those who have always lived in the rural districts of a

country, never know very much about the outside world. To many of them, life is indeed very simple; and from generation to generation they continue to do just as their fathers did before them—with never a thought of rising to higher levels. And, in considering this phase of human life, I am almost constrained to believe that the rural life and customs of our people would furnish much material and inspiration for the author who desires to write in a solid and truthful fashion. Tom Watson says that books are valuable only to the extent that they tell the truth; and while we have an immense quantity of totally worthless literature, which people will persist in devouring, there is really no necessity for such a poverty of genius on the part of our American writers. The quiet rural communities should be the theme of innumerable writings that ought never to grow old. The book which pleases, the story which charms, is the one which illustrates and directs, or develops, one's highest and most elevating thoughts; and, long after it has been read, the sentiments which it inspired in the reader's heart will still linger with him, and comfort him when everything elese fails.

And, as I was saying, those who live in the country generally lead very quiet lives. Often does it seem that our lives out here are really monotonous; for we have nothing that would be very likely to put the fiery energy into us, like those who live in and around public places. Nevertheless, the country is not, in comparison with the town, quite dead yet. Indeed, it is now on the verge of a great awakening; and one day it is going to show itself in a very striking fashion. And, viewing it in the truest, and widest sense of the word, the country is full of hope and promise.

There's life in the old land yet, and I wish to have a part in developing it. But I am digressing.

In my home neighborhood we do, occasionally, have an exciting episode; and it is of one of them I wish to write, since it impressed itself upon my memory in a way that I can never forget. Sometimes a mad dog comes along, occasionally an accident involving destruction of life or property happens, or perhaps some careless person "lets the fire out" on a windy day. And nothing that I have ever witnessed produces quite as much excitement in the country as a raging forest-fire. I have witnessed several of them in my life, but will tell only of one in this little sketch. Somehow, I have a strange, far-away longing to write about only those things which have remained in my memory, without my putting forth any particular efforts to keep them there.

One night, several years ago, my mother looked out through our south window. The moon was not shining, and the sky was nearly covered with broken, floating clouds. The wind was blowing, too, and—what light was that she saw glimmering in the woods, just back of the barnyard, or a little southeast of it, rather? Ha! it must be a fire.

The alarm was shouted. "Fire! fire!" was the cry, echoing far and away. People were aroused out of their sleepy beds, frightened nearly out of their wits at—they scarcely knew what. Some of them hastened to the scene as quickly as possible; and others remained behind,—to imagine all sorts of silly things, and to work themselves into a frenzy generally.

The wind blew, the fire raged, darkness reigned, and the frightened citizens contested the angry flames with all of their might. Over stumps, rocks and hills; in and out and

through hollows and thickets—they hardly knew where they were much of the time—they battled; falling, stumbling, climbing, groping, cursing and shouting—they labored on. All through the night the battle raged. No general commanding led these valiant soldiers; no drums beat, to nerve them onward; no flag waved above them, as an emblem of their courage and devotion; the battle just raged in its own irregular, furious way.

But after almost super-human efforts, the flames were subdued. No lives were lost, and only some wood and lumber were destroyed, besides what destruction of trees resulted as a natural consequence of the fire. I had a very aggravated case of the toothache on the night of the fire, and I believe I was frightened even more than I cared to admit. And it took some of the fire-fighters at least a week to recover from the effects of their night of strenuous exertion;—while others were so angry with the "triflin' thing who set the woods on fire," that their physical powers were not seriously impaired by it.

So you see, gentle readers, that we of the country, the backwoods country, do sometimes have something to stir us up.

"RICHARD."

Away out in the backwoods of South Carolina, there lives rather a unique character in the person of a negro dwarf, whom we shall call "Richard," the banjoist. He is nearly four feet tall; humpbacked and short of waist; square-headed and very black; and has a huge blister on his left ear, and a mouth full of even, white, pearly teeth. He seldom shuts his mouth, and so his teeth can be seen most

of the time. It is said that his nurse dropped him when he was an infant, and broke his neck. Hence his deformity of person. But I am of the opinion that he is just as he was made; though that is neither here nor there in this little sketch.

I have known Richard ever since I was a child, having been accustomed to seeing him pass my home quite often. And one day, several years ago, I was out in my piazza with my banjo. I saw him coming. "Now's my chance," I thought. So I requested him to stop, and play some for me. He gladly did so; for he is a noted banjoist, and takes delight in playing for "de white folks." He sat and played and sang several of his own peculiarly mournful songs, some of his own composing, in a manner that was really charming. It seemed, somehow or other, that the mournfulness of his bodily deformity would insist on finding expression through the medium of his songs; for each one of them had a strange, sad, plaintive, far-away ring to it. He sang in a harsh, unmelodious voice, but his picking of the banjo was really very musical.

The next time I had the pleasure of hearing him perform on that instrument, he was making the music for a party. In those days, he seemed happiest when playing for a party; and no matter how much noise the dancers would make, one could still hear Richard's voice and banjo above it all. I have sat for several hours at a time, enjoying his music as well as I ever enjoyed anything of the sort, in those days. Somehow, Richard, the banjoist, always appealed to me in a way that was, at once, both fascinating and irresistible.

But now I seldom see him, and never hear him play his banjo any more. We, the old-times and I, have drifted

apart; and now times are different. I sometimes wonder if he still plays. I suppose he does, tho', for he used to love his banjo very much. Some nights he would play, in his own little cabin home, until the tears came into his eyes, so intense were the emotions thus stirred to life within his breast. Ah! the outside world never knows what goes on behind the screen, after the lights are turned on, and when all mankind is locked in the arms of Sleep. If such were not the case, I believe it would all be better. If such were not the case, I believe people would be more thoughtful, and less inclined to meanness. If such were not the case I believe that there would be less sorrow, and more joy, in the world to-day.

Nevertheless, I must believe that the Father knows best. Viewed in their true light, we are constrained to believe that the plan of creation and the order of human life to-day, as we understand them to be, are better than anything else that mankind might originate. The thoughtful person, always and everywhere, finds this to be true.

So I bid my banjoist farewell. I thank him for the lessons he has taught, for the pleasure he used to give me. I hope that if the Father so wills, I may one day hear Richard play and sing once more. I do see him, occasionally, now,—but not often. Even as we grow up, times change, and change rapidly for all of us.

THE BANJO.

There is one instrument of music which, because of old associations and fond memories of the past, I desire to give a prominent place in this work. I know not how others may see it, or in what light the musical world so considers

it, but to me it is altogether fine, sweet and musical. It is the first instrument that I can remember hearing played; and ever since that far-off evening, when I was scarcely more than a baby and when some colored men played on it in my uncle's kitchen for the first time within my recollection, I have loved the banjo—loved it as I have loved no other instrument, save the guitar. And sometimes it is rather difficult for me to decide which I love best, the banjo or the guitar.

I have spent many a delightful hour, listening to the banjo; indeed, for several years of my early life I heard no other instrument—excepting, occasionally, when I heard some chance person or persons play on the French harp. "The Guitarist" was, for several years and ere she took up the guitar, a banjoist of ability; and she gave me many a pleasant hour of delightful entertainment.

But during the later years of my life I have not had so very much of the banjo; for things have changed in my home-neighborhood. As we grow older, it is best that changes should come, too, we know; still, one cannot avoid experiencing rather a melancholy feeling whenever one is reminded of the happy days of the ever-receding past. We all would fain keep them with us—if we could. But we cannot, and therein lies the saddest phase of the whole realm of creation. For is it not peculiarly mournful, solemnly sweet and sad, to think that our happiest times are generally the shortest of all?

The first thing that ever touched the chords of harmony within the human breast was music; and ever since man's mournful fall from Grace, humanity has sought consolation from it. The happy, loving, joyous, thoughtful souls of all ages have loved it, danced to it, and wept over it.

When everything else fails to bring order out of chaos, in the human mind, music is invariably the last resort. And since we must know that God, Himself, does live in beauty and harmony everywhere, music will evermore have a prominent place in the Kingdom of Love.

The banjo is, therefore, a great civilizer. Its resonant, melodious twang is one of our most prominent assets; and it will always have devotees sufficient to keep it in fashion. A youthful inmate of my home is now a banjoist, and I never weary of his music. And as the banjo is a plainly-constructed instrument, almost anybody can even make one, which puts it within the reach of those of the very humblest of means.

In other parts of this work there may be found other allusions to the banjo; as I write only as I can think of something appropriate.

A BACKWOODS PREACHER.

Away out in the backwoods of the Southern States, there lives a quaint people. They are, for the most part, a plain, kindly, hospitable race; and strangers will always find them prepared to accommodate. They seem to be quite satisfied with life as it is, too; for they do not take kindly to new innovations, every time. Nevertheless, they are, generally speaking, a sturdy, solid, kind-hearted people, whom it is often a genuine pleasure to be among. Not having been educated, they do not know what it is to put on airs, or to make any affectations whatever. They are just natural, and there is much to commend in their mode of living. They enjoy themselves most of the time, and they wish you to do the same when among them. Many

of them have an abundance of good, substantial food all the time, and the visitor is often almost compelled to eat too much, though he might often leave the table with the hostess complaining that he has "not eat 'nothin' hardly." These people know nothing of books, magazines, or newspapers—that is, numbers of them do not. They have schools and churches, too; but they never seem to advance much in learning and intelligence. Their teachers are often extremely illiterate themselves, and so they can never see any good in "sich nonsense" as grammar, physiology, Latin, algebra, geography, and history: they flatter themselves, that they "kin teach readin', writin', 'rithmetic, an' spellin'," but all other things are quite beneath their notice. Hence, away with all such! Their ministers also are often very illiterate. Many of them can scarcely read, but they can talk. And the people will, therefore, permit them to preach; since they have a mistaken idea that none should preach except those who are called to the ministry, the pathetic part of their idea being, that they believe none but the uneducated are ever so called! They know nothing about learning; and are, therefore, much prejudiced against all educated ministers of the Gospel. Poor deluded people! would that they were otherwise! Would that I could enlighten them!

It was my fortune, some years ago, to see and hear one of these "called preachers." He came from the mountains of western North Carolina, and was a regularly ordained minister of the Gospel,—though he could just read with some degree of intelligence. It was even said of him that he never learned letters until after he had married, when his wife taught him! I cannot, however, vouch for the truth of this statement; I knew him only as a kindly, emo-

tional sort of a man, who was intensely in earnest, and wished to do what he could to advance the Kingdom everywhere. He lacked in knowledge, learning and understanding, though: and this rendered him quite deficient.

I heard him preach once. Poor man! he said nothing; for he had nothing to say. He delivered no message; for he had no words with which to give expression to it. He stirred up no spiritual excitement; for he was incapable of anything of the sort. He said: "I don't know that I will take any text; I will just say a few words." (He did not use the word "shall.")

He then proceeded to read some of the Word, the portion he read being a part of John's Gospel—written by "illiterate, unlearned John," as he fondly expressed it,—thus admitting his prejudice against education!

He rambled on in his discourse for an hour or more, now and then stopping to recover himself, as he wept much in his preaching. He seemed to have a message for the world, too; still, he could not deliver it. He could not draw upon his imagination, could not touch the responsive chords in others hearts, could not arouse the sympathies of his auditors.

Yet, that is the kind of religious instruction that hundreds of our people have to receive year after year. Many of those who live in the backwoods never know what it is to rise from the dead, set level of their fathers. They never receive even the poorest of opportunities for self-improvement. No; not one penny of Carnegie's money ever goes to them! No one ever sheds tears over the wretchedness of their conditions. Not one, among so many great hearts, ever reduces vast congregations to tears by describing their degraded lives, and making an appeal in their behalf. Not

one, in short, ever seems to care for our own people nearly so well as they do for the heathen in far-away lands. Even the negro comes first, in commanding and receiving the sympathy and assistance of those who have money and things to give away.

And this ignorance and illiteracy does not stop at the foot-hills: it comes right on up into our very doors. Ah! even the towns come in for their share of it. (One day, the author was seated in his room, writing and alone for the time. He was quite busy at his task, when three women came in. He knew them whenever they entered the door; for they were near neighbors, practically speaking. But he had never seen them before; that is, had never conversed with them.

He turned his chair, and prepared to entertain them till his mother and sisters should arrive. Now, they were wholly illiterate; not one of them could even read—and there was a large family of them. Of course, conversation was nearly out of the question for even just a short time;—but I shall pass over that part of it and ask: "Why do we send money, learning, and talent to foreign lands, when thousands of our own flesh and blood do not even know the first letter?")

Nevertheless, this sketch would fail of its object, were I not prepared to say that our poor people have at least a few champions. The Columbia State, the South's greatest newspaper, is one. In its magnificent stand for compulsory education, it certainly challenges the admiration of lovers of progress, everywhere. Mr. Zach McGhee, the eminent Washington correspondent, is another. "The Dark Corner," his great novel of backwoods life in South Carolina, wins for him very high rank as a leader in the moral uplift.

And the Hon. Thomas E. Watson is yet another. Ah! Watson is splendid in his great and profound learning, honesty of purpose, and magnificent courage. His rule is, "Let those who will, concern themselves about the far-off heathen; my sympathy and charity are for those who live nearest to me."

(Since I am, in the foregoing, assaying to discuss a question of national importance, some of my readers may not, perhaps, understand my meaning just as it should be understood. Therefore, I would most respectfully say, that as they proceed in the reading of the book, all obscurity will be found vanishing like clouds before a brisk west wind I purpose to "cover the whole ground" ere I shall consent to lay down my work. No room for unjust censure shall be left).

RANDOM COMMENTS.

I somehow feel that there is something in me, and that it must come out. In my heart, in my soul, there is a song that is unsung, a story which has not yet been told. There are times in my life when I seem to rise to very great heights, times in which I can almost—if not quite—draw aside the veil which screens the unknown from the view of the known. But it is not so. Not yet has man reached the place where he can say, "At last, at last! Ah! I now know the mysteries of the great unknown. I have spent many long years searching for this, and many times I have been driven to madness over it;—but now I know all." Not yet, I say, can man make such a declaration;—and he never shall make it. At the best, we know nothing. We learn as we grow older, too; but our strength, our ability to live

and to do, is in our faith and hope—and not in anything else.

The reader may, I am aware, consider the title of this book rather strange. And there might even be those who can scarcely understand why I should have selected such a name for it. But gentle reader, have you not, many times in your life, been "under the lamp" with a book,—long, long after everybody else in the house was sleeping, sleeping soundly and peacefully away? Have you not very often closed the doors, lighted the lamp, drawn up the easy chair, got your favorite book, and prepared for the sweetest pleasure known to us,—that of reading? Then, I say, if you have done this you can appreciate the suggestiveness of the name this volume bears. The name of a book ought always to be its index too.

This is really my first literary attempt, and I have pored over it long and earnestly. I dared to "let myself loose" in composing it, and wrote just what I desired to write. But prudence demanded that I omit much of what I had written, therefore the volume is submitted to the reading public in its present shape. I "cut it out" in an altogether ruthless fashion,—although it was hard, very hard, for me to do it. I lingered long and thoughtfully over page after page of the original manuscript. I somehow really wished to publish it as it was written, but I just could not. A kind of modesty, or something akin to it, compelled me to leave out nearly half of all that I had written.

The reader may also think that some of this work has been overdrawn. To many of them it might, indeed, seem that I have been carried away by the force of my own enthusiasm. But think what you please: I care not. I have striven to see the better side of life; I have dared to think

for myself; I have ventured to be original. I have often been wholly disgusted with some of those vile things known as "sex-problem" writings, therefore I have determined to deal only in clean literature. Each individual member of the human race can, and will, settle the unmentionable subjects and problems, whether they are ever discussed in books or not. The reading public desires to be entertained: it does not like to have its sense of decency shocked by vile exposures. Some of the physical culture publications are quite disgraceful. Ah! what fool imagines that he can screen his own lustful passions (and practices) by calling all the rest of mankind prudes? Physical culture is all right, but it is no justification for immorality.

Therefore, I have written this work just for the entertainment of my readers. Taken as a whole, it might be regarded as the embodiment of an ideal. And I do not believe that there is one line in it to which an exception could justly be taken.

"The Story of My Life and Work" was, I am constrained to admit, somewhat of a disappointment to some of my readers. In my heart of hearts, somethig tells me that, with several of its readers it, was almost a failure. Yet, it is impossible for one to please everybody. I know that hundreds of those who paid for, and read, my first booklet were pleased, well pleased, with it. And therefore I was encouraged to attempt another. I suppose it was just a certain kind of daring ambition which urged me on in my work; but whatever it was, it has filled me with the desire irresistible to show what is in me. This work is, therefore not designed as a justification, but rather as a defense, of my earlier writings. I do not claim that it is perfect: I merely say that it is the best I could accomplish. The expression

and style are, at times, rather obscure; but as the reader proceeds everything will be made clear.

This book was, originally, designed and begun as a volume to contain 100,000 words, the idea of such a work being conceived one day while the author was penning the opening section ("Chat") of The Literary-Education Department, for The Gaffney Ledger. He forthwith proceeded to announce his intention of writing this book, as the readers of The Ledger can doubtless remember. In the first announcement, dated Nov. 12, 1909, he promised to publish "Under the Lamp" sometime "within two years from date" (the title had not then been selected); but since that time he has decided to divide his work into four sections, publishing them in the order of one a year until his proposed work shall have been finished. This will be the author's first real work in the realm of literature. He has already made his debut in "The Story of My Life and Work."

"BROWN-EYES."

Once there lived a dear little girl, who had pretty brown eyes, wavy brown hair, a beautiful complexion, and pearly-white teeth. Her voice was soft, sweet, and low; and all of her movements were exceedingly graceful. She had the art of being quite agreeable all the time.

She "dearly loved fun," as she often said; and was never happier than when engaged in that pleasantest of all pastimes—having fun. The funny side of her nature was genuinely humorous, finely developed, too; and she never saw "anything funny" in grossness, rudeness, or vulgarity.

She always seemed to be happy and contented: with her,

one almost believed, life was truly one "grand, sweet song" every day; for she was oh! so cheerful,—so very cheerful. But it was not so: she only had the tact of concealment. Often when her laugh was merriest, her manner gentlest, her heart was nearly breaking with sadness. Ah! it was only at such times that her beautiful nature showed itself to greatest advantage, that she seemed almost to melt from very tenderness. Nevertheless, but few ever knew of this side of his nature; for she kept it well concealed. None ever saw her weep—though in the privacy of her own room she often wept much. She had her own little sorrows, sorrows which were peculiar to her own gentle nature.

She was gifted, in some ways. She sang beautifully and played on the guitar very sweetly. She loved babies, flowers, pictures, music, story books, and parties. She also liked the boys just a little—but not any too well. Somehow, she always had the peculiar gift—very rare—of giving the boys a really good time with herself, while at the same time she unconsciously taught them to feel that they must remain at a safe distance. And any of the poor fellows would rather have died than incur her displeasure.

She was not, however, intellectual, and all things of an intellectual nature made her tired. It was her way just to love, with all the intensity of her romantic little self, whatever or whoever happened to appeal to her fancy. And thus it came about, once, that she—but let us pass over that part of her story. The reader can now understand why she had an "aching void," why she was so tender.

Such was her nature that, once happily mated, she would have made home nearly a paradise for the lucky man. She was, indeed, a fine, beautiful fragile flower,—that would no doubt have withered away under cruel treatment. Although

she was really of a forgiving, forgetting temperament, any unkindness or rudeness hurt her very severely. So refined was her nature, that it was quite easy for the thoughtless person to overthrow her little ideals. But she always rallied from such overthrows, arising stronger each time.

Suffering, the sense of something lost to us for all future time in this life, renders only the heart, and not the features, beautiful. As time goes on, he or she of the "aching void" will gradually come to wear a countenance of mournful sadness; although the sufferer might have her spiritual nature so finely developed, in later years, that eternal spring will indeed reign in her heart forevermore. Such a girl was "Brown-Eyes," and she was an irresistibly, indescribably lovely girl.

To one who used to see her in her home, whither he often lied himself for pure love of being near her, she was a real embodiment of his own conception of the ideal girl. To see her moving about in the performance of her home duties, to sit out in the piazza as she played and sang, or just in any way one happened to see her, she was ever the same fair, sweet little creature.

She was natural. Some persons may put on, pretend to be what they are not; but she was not that sort. She had faults, too; and it is not the purpose of this article to make an angel of a natural human being. Still, there are a few genuinely lovable creatures in this world; there are a few whose natures are so beautiful that they form the connecting link between the earth and the heavenly spheres of life; there are a few who literally compel us to believe in the goodness and power of God, just by their own pure loveliness. Everybody's inner man dictates, and enforces, the truth of this assertion home to every heart.

She loved to write, and to receive, pretty letters; and while she wrote to many of her friends, she never wrote carelessly. Everything she ever wrote was characterized by modesty, delicacy, courtesy and simplicity of manner.

One day there was a picnic at Holly Springs, and of the vast throng of people who were in attendance was one man in a wheel chair. He was a candidate, seeking the votes of the citizens,—and also their friendship and good will. He had studied very hard for a long, long time, and his face was pale and fair. He also looked sad and care-worn, although his eyes gleamed with the true fire of genius whenever he went on the platform, to address the voters. And such speeches that he did make. "They were simply fine." None of his opponents could "stand before" him, so very irresistible was his logic. He was really the one peerless speaker who combined infantine manners with those of the ablest orator that had ever been at Holly Springs; and when he arose to make his speech, that day, he was at his best. He spoke just about one hour, and his effort won for him the whole Holly Springs district.

The Man in the wheel chair had never been able to walk a step in his life, and had never attended school a day. But at this period of his existence he was really a well-educated man. His life had been very hard; and so he had, just in order to make living easier for himself, decided to enter politics. The time that he spoke at Holly Springs was during his first campaign. And when he arose to speak, he paused for just a moment to gaze over the crowd. There were some who wondered why he did this, but others whispered among themselves, "He is looking for somebody." That "somebody" was "Brown-Eyes."

The Man was looking for the face of his inspirer; and

when he saw her, somewhere out in the crowd, a great feeling of tenderest melancholy surged over his being for about the space of a minute, almost overwhelming him with its spell. For he had loved her, truly and devotedly, ever since he was quite a young man. Now he was away past his majority, in years, although the balmy fragrance of eternal spring still reigned in his heart. Because of his physical affliction, he had never told her of his great love for her. He had never said much about it to any one, although a few of his most intimate friends were aware of it. And I suspect that she also knew it—though it was of course not her part to make the advances which are necessary to the perfecting of such matters.

So the years wore on. The man was finally elected to the governorship of his State. He was highly honored, and wherever he went the people seemed to unite in paying him attentions. But he never forgot the girl of his dreams, and sometimes he was inexpressibly sad. Somehow all of his popularity, honors, and flattery never could quite overcome his feeling of melancholy; and sometimes he was dangerously near the dark Valley.

One day the news came that there had been a bad wreck of a train, on the railway somewhere south of Holly Springs, in which a number of people were killed and injured,—among the latter being "Brown-Eyes," who happened to be returning home from Columbia, where she had been attending school and where she had only recently graduated with very high honors. The doctor pronounced her injuries fatal, tho' he said that she might live for sometime, with proper nursing.

Soon the news of the sad event reached the Governor, and he forthwith proceeded to hasten out to her home. As

he neared the house, he could perceive signs of inexpressible mournfulness. He went in, and found that she had only a few hours to live; but she was calm, serene, and happy. His first look told him, at once, that he himself was the one man now. Ah! they both knew the truth at last. He bent over, taking her beautiful lily-white hands in his. He was so full of emotion that speech was not possible, nay, it was a scene too holy for the sound of human voices just then. She passed away as she had lived—in a manner beautiful to behold. The light of life almost went out for the Man in the wheel chair when he saw that she was no more.

He was, however, able to attend the funeral. It was on a fine Sabbath morning in July, and all Nature was at rest. Everything seemed to unite in worshiping the Father. The funeral sermon was delivered by a young man, just beginning his career as a minister, and at times he was sublimely eloquent. No such sermon had ever been heard in the Holly Springs church before.

Then came the mournful procession to the cemetery. The man had requested the entire congregation to unite in singing Her favorite hymn, "Rock of Ages," after which they all sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

In after years, the Man in the wheel chair became tired of politics, and decided to retire to private life. He had fought a long, hard fight, and had come out victorious all along the line. But now he was getting old, and wanted a rest. He became sick, and soon he felt that he was nearing the end; but he was not afraid.

In a little churchyard at Holly Springs there are two graves, marked by a plain slab of pure white marble and a

bed of violets and roses, over which two fine magnolias spread their beautiful branches.

On one side of the slab are these words, indelibly carved into the stone:

"They loved each other in life, and in death they were not parted."

Thus ends the story of "Brown-Eyes," one of the finest characters that ever lived. The world rolls on as it always did, and knows nothing of this beautiful story except what I have set forth in the foregoing. Nevertheless, the heroine of my story will always remain my dream girl.

SUMMER (1910.)

Summer, the pleasantest time of all the year, is with us once more. We are glad—we are happy—we are rejoiced. Yes; for we love the beautiful summers of Dixie as we love our souls' mates

All nature is in harmony with itself now. "Bids fair to rival all previous summers, in beauty of form and color," we inwardly say.

Everything seems to be sweet and good, pleasant and beautiful, calm and serene. The birds sing, the flowers bloom, the farmers work and sing in the fields, the sun shines warm and bright, the sky is a beautiful blue, the wind sighs a melancholy requiem through the tops of the trees, light billowy clouds float above, and the summer is often refreshed by those cooling things called summer showers. Such is the "good old summer-time" in the sunny South.

Babbling brooks, limpid streams, sweet willows, shady banks, are other pleasant things that must be taken in con-

nection with summer. What is more pleasant than bathing in the summer streams, among the sweet willows? What is more health-giving than to inhale the pure atmosphere of the summer woods? Life is really worth living, now that the summer is here.

Spring comes, and we look eagerly forward to the advent of summer; summer comes, and soon we think, in a rather melancholy way, of the dear old autumn. And thus goes life with us all the time.

The wailing whippoorwill is heard in the mead, when most other birds are silent—for he sings only at night; the mocking-bird makes strange, sweet music near our doors; the July fly chants his lovely song out in the fields when the sun shines its warmest; the cheerful little katydid sings away all night long. I have somewhere called the whippoorwill "America's favored nightingale"—and I see no reason, now, for taking the expression back. For, really, isn't it the prince of songsters among all of America's feathered inhabitants, excepting the mocking-bird?

Dixie is, to us who love her, the best country in all the world. Italy is fine, no doubt; but give me the "sunny South" for my home, always. Cuba, the Queen of the Antilles, is a gem; but the sunny South is quite as beautiful, in summer, as that fair little island is said to be.

Truth constrains us to say that the summer is not always so lovely; but why not put forth the bright side? Why not tell only of pretty things and scenes? No reader loves dry reading; and in this essay on summer, the author has determined to write from the point of view of a true lover. It is his purpose to go down deeply into his subject, giving the best thought and aspiration that he can, to summer's many, various, and hidden meanings. It might be that

some will consider the subject unworthy of such an essay; but I believe all lovers of beauty will see in it the germs of a real inspiration.

Silence reigns supreme in the old house when these words are being penned this calm summer morning. Out at the barn a hen is making a noise; and a July fly sings its sweet summer tune out somewhere in the fields—which are green with growing cotton. But near me naught is heard, save the ticking of my little clock. And such an inspiration is its ticking! I should be really a genius if I were able to give expression to every sentiment which this clock inspires within me.—But I am digressing.

Some days the peculiar melancholy of summer seems to enter one's being. He loves it, is strengthened by it, and can conceive of nothing better than this "peculiar melancholy." Yet the joy of it is always oppressive. It is similar to the feeling inspired by the "loved and lost,"—although it is better, much better, to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all. And these calm summer days, therefore, are very conducive to my happiness. A book,—"Evangeline," "Lucile," or "The Prince of the House of David,"—read in connection with the "summer's spell," is nearly enough to bring happiness back to my heart. For the time I really forget that I ever had a heart-breaking sorrow. My life is in my work, my books, and my love of Nature. I put off this particular writing till summer should have come, just in order that I might have the advantages of these soul-satisfying days. I see the Father's loving kindness, shining like the King of Day, in all nature, and through all of Nature's handiwork; and I wonder at all the badness that is permitted to go on! So mournful—so mournful!

UNDER THE LAMP WITH "BEN HOPE."

In whatever way you might take it, the summer in Dixie is perfectly lovely. I often stroll out into my piazza, after the day's work has been done, and gaze out over the beautiful cotton fields. I believe that if I were a poet I should sing a divine melody in honor of the sweetness of Nature in the sunny South. I have just finished reading "Evangeline," that fine poem by Longfellow; I have, perhaps, just come in from a ride in my wheel chair; or may be I have been driving all day with my faithful companion, several miles from home. But, let the time, or the scene, or the circumstances be what they will, I always see the summer in the same light.

And the summer nights! What scene, in all nature, can ever be more lovely than a summer night? The light, fleecy clouds form its necklace; the pretty little stars make up its bouquet of angels' forget-me-nots; and the katydid and whippoorwill strike the strings of their lyres in honor of the summer night. The flowers also lend an added charm to it, by sweetly perfuming the air,

It has always been my keenest delight to enjoy these beautiful nights of summer. Sometimes when the moon shines and when there are light foamy clouds floating above, a shower of rain comes. Then it is that the night is mysteriously beautiful, and seems to be weeping for the dead and gone summers of the dear past. I am sitting out in the piazza, enjoying just such a night as the foregoing words speak of. Everything is calm and serene around me; and, as a sort of accompaniment to the pattering raindrops, I fall to musing over the summers of other lands. I am happy at this moment,—but how is it with all of my other fellow-creatures? For I can never think of my own happiness without also thinking of the sorrows of others.

Somewhere, even now, some weary traveler is no doubt toiling sadly, and almost hopelessly, along a warm, dusty road. His way is hard, but he perservers just as long as he can.—But here I sit, penning a eulogy on summer! And thus you see that life is a paradox, and contradicts itself everywhere.

Now let us transfer the scene to the tropics. The sun shines warm, very warm, and the air is oppressively heavy with the sweet perfume of innumerable flowers—flowers which grow only in the warmer climates. But even in the hottest of weathers and climates, something is always provided to alleviate the severity. Every desert has its oasis, every sun is tempered to agreeableness by the winds and rains. And thus it is that we love the summer, and see in it the loving kindness of the dear Father.

But the summer is once more passing away. I have enjoyed it immensely. Many days have I spent out in my piazza, in happy conversation with my old-time friends, looking out over the fields and woods and at the mystic August skies. Ah! those were happy days; for I was a child then. I had never known care nor sorrow, I had never before tasted of ambition, I had not as yet come to a real knowledge of life's meaning. I sigh heavily for the dear, sweet, beautiful past.

Tread lightly, gentle reader, as you read these closing lines. Disturb me not, for a little while. Allow me to finish my time of sweetly musing over these closing days of summer. Let me cause all of my old-time friends and pleasures to pass in grand review before my mind's eye. Permit me once more to think of Her. Ah! dear Little Girl, you are indeed the flower of my sad heart. My sins have been great, great and almost unpardonable, I once

thought. But not so. If we do sin, God will and does forgive us. And somehow I have learned to associate the light, airy form of my dream-girl with the goodness and purity of God. Even now I seem to have risen to heights sublime; and even as I pen these words, can of a truth say that I have forgiven all personal injury. The world goes grandly, gaily, heedlessly on;—but I am entitled to the privilege of enjoying it in my own way.

FRAGMENTS.

* * * * *

Lillian, sweet Lillian! . . . .

* * * * *

. . . To me, it (the world) was all a huge book, the leaves of which I had not as yet turned: . . She has been my one inspiration in many dark hours. Somehow, I have caught the loveliness of her being in my soul, the image of her dear face in the faces of other girls; . . . . . And why did I do so many other absurd things? Just because I loved a little girl, a mere child!

* * * * *

. . . . Lillian, too, became a guitarist. She played and sang beautifully. And . . . she often "twanged her strings" for my own especial amusement. . . .

* * * * *

. . . For my newspaper work, and my wider reading as well, had taught me that human nature is the same in all ages and in all climes.

. . . I gazed long and thoughtfully at my great row of books, my rolls and stacks of manuscript, my old compositions, and the pigeon-holes of my desk—filled, as they

were, with letters and post cards, over some of which I used to cry. . . .

* * * * *

I remembered the parties which I used to attend, and the good times I had. I remembered one night in particular, which I spent at my uncle's home. We had a party there, and, because of a sudden shower, I remained over night. My old aunt—God bless her!—put me to bed, herself, in her own little room, just as she always did when I was a child. She was far-advanced in years then, too; but somehow she seemed younger than usual, that night. (I suppose she was thinking of other days.) It was, I believe, an intense joy for her to be permitted thus to minister to my needs once more. And ere long I was sleeping as soundly and peacefully as a little child,—my last waking thoughts being of Lilian, fair Lillian.

I remember one other time that I was at a neighbor's home. Lillian and her brother, (who was my faithful friend,) were there. We sang and played some that night, and I believe I never felt better in my life. After I had retired the melody of her sweet voice seemed to ring on in my soul till far into the night. Ah! had the beautiful, harmonious soul of "Dreamy-Eyes" once more found expression through Lillian? I almost believe that it had.

I remembered the time I went out into the country, selling my little book. Lillian's father was kind enough to accompany me on my first trip. We did not reach his home until some time after the twinkling stars had peeped forth. We were very tired, too, so we retired early. He took me into the little room, (where I had spent so many pleasant nights with my faithful friend,) and put me to bed. He left the lamp burning, but turned low,

making the room dark and shadowy. I could not sink into the dreamy land of sleep at once, however, tired out as I was; somehow my memory was busy. I just wanted to think.

I remembered how I had lain and dreamed of her many times. The last time I was at Mr. M's. I slept in the same room which "Jake" occupied when he made his home with Mr. M. That morning, as the light gradually made its way through the east window, I gazed about. "Jake" had, in one of his funny moods, framed a number of his old post cards making one great huge picture of them, which he put up in a conspicuous place for everybody to see. I gazed at that "absurd plaster" till the tears came into my eyes; —for they were the cards which she—dear child—had sent "Jake" when they, he and she, were "sports!" Ah! silent relic of happy days long departed! I would gladly have kept "Jake's" picture always, if I could have done so, I thought

I remember how in my leisure moments I would play on my autoharp, such grand old tunes as "Martyn," "Pleyel's Hymn," "Prayer," etc., till the tears would start to my eyes (And to this day I never hear those old tunes without a feeling of sadness coming over me).

I remembered the time I visited my gentle cousin. She sang and played the organ for my enjoyment; and as she thus entertained me in her home that afternoon, I thought more wistfully of Lillian than ever.

I remembered the many pleasant "times" I once had with all of friends, but Jim and "Jake" I remembered best of all. Somehow they were more intimately associated with me than the others. "Jim," funny little soul that he was, had truly been a friend to me in my affliction and poverty.

I remembered the many long, happy hours I had spent in penning "copy" for "The Ledger." I believe those were really the happiest days of my whole life, everything considered. I know they were the most profitable, from several points of view.

Yes, I was at last an educated man. I was, I felt, able to fight the great, fast, furious battle of life with the best of them. I had succeeded in all of my efforts, in an educational way: for I had become a master of the English language and literature, grammar and the art of writing, arithmetic and all forms of business. And what was best of all, I was slowly but surely growing stronger physically. I could not walk as yet; but I had never dared to entertain any hope of walking, in this life, however, so I did not think much about that.

I found work congenial to my taste in Atlanta, as also did my brothers. We went. But I could not consent to leave without bidding all of my kind friends a last farewell, therefore I "visited round" among them for a few days. I visited her home last of all. I told her my plans, and asked her not to entirely forget me, though I did not wish to pain her in any way. I hoped she would continue to enjoy life, and that she would be as successful in all things as I had been in my studies. Then I requested her to play her guitar for me: for somehow I once more desired to be a child again, listening to the strains of the guitar. Ah! how sweetly she did sing and play that calm summer evening! My heart was full. I essayed to sing, too, but I could not.

That morning, I departed. The sun shone brightly; the wind blew gently from the west, wafting the musical sounds of the birds' singing and the perfume of summer flowers

ever onward; and all nature was balmy with the breath of summer in the sunny South. I believe she was very sad when she gave me her hand, for perhaps the last time in this world, that morning. I know I was.

But I will tell no more now. We soon reached Atlanta, my brothers and I, and began work at once. Everybody there was kind to us, and we made great progress—considering. We gradually became accustomed to our new surroundings, and our work was easy, pleasant and profitable.

One day I stood up at my desk in one of "The Georgian's" composing rooms, not exactly knowing why I did so. I then took a step forward. What! was it possible that I was walking? God, in His infinite mercy, had at last given me strength to walk! I lingered in Atlanta for a few more months, then I one day said, "Boys, you may stay here if you wish; I'm going back to South Carolina, and seek the fairest flower that ever grew." And so here in my little home I am. She and the tots are with me, and we are all very happy. She told me, in confidence, that she "never loved any other fellow" after I went to Atlanta.

Gentle reader, I have many true friends, who would, I really believe, rejoice to see my life end just as this story has ended. But at this writing I am still working away in my own little room.

A DREAM.

The lamp burned low and softly. No sound was in the room, save that of the old clock, as it quietly ticked the time away. On the wall, just above the great red lamp, there was a beautiful painting of "Night," on each side of

which was a portrait of Father and Mother—the one calm and serene and stately in his old age, the other kind and gentle and benevolent in her own sweet way. And on the opposite wall of the room, just above the book case, there was a little Memorial in a pretty frame, which had been placed there in memory of the Little Girl. And near a table, which always stood in the centre of the room, sat a man in an easy chair reading. After a time, he laid aside the book, and fell to musing. He could not walk, the man couldn't, for he was a shut-in. And to-night he was alone, in his own beloved "den." He had just finished a work on his "Ideals," and as he sat musing for a while he could not forbear congratulating himself on his success. He had not reached his ideal, either, he knew; yet he felt that his labors had not been altogether in vain.

In this room, wherein the man was sitting and which he called his "den," there were a great number of beautiful books, a fine old clock, a sofa, a number of small pictures, and just everything that goes to make up a student's retreat. The clock occupied the place of honor on the mantel-piece, and the sofa was near the great south window, the window which afforded such an excellent view of the landscape. And to-night the man was supremely happy; indeed, the great, sad happiness of his soul was really oppressive. All of his past history marched in grand procession before his mental vision, and he seemed to see one bright form very distinctly. And thus he fell asleep, and thus the old clock ticked away. The man was no longer alone. He was in another and a different time, and near him was the object of his passions, the flower of his heart, the inspirer of his life. For many long years he had loved her and dreamed of her. And now she was his—all his!

He seemed to have traveled back over the past years of his life, and once more become a young man—with the difference that he was not a cripple, but was well and strong.

Then his great dream continued. He seemed also to have a beautiful home, and was satisfied with life. His surroundings were pleasing to the eye and pleasant to live among. His pretty flower garden seemed to smile right in one's very face, and his music and books and pictures were a great delight

He remembered the time he fell in love, and determined to win her for whom he would gladly have given his life. He remembered the time he proposed, out under the old apple tree, one morning in June. That was many years ago, but he still remembered how he felt that morning. Ah! he was so happy that he hardly ate or slept for a week afterward; that is, he ate and slept without realizing it, so very sublime were his feelings.

He remembered the fine summer day that he led her to the nuptial bower, sweet, blushing and beautiful. That morning, he got up in a dream, as it were, and seemed to see things only in their heavenly sense. Nothing mean entered his mind and even when he stood under the bower everything was beautiful—quite beautiful.

The years quickly passed on. Messengers from the unseen world brought them children,—one by one of whom had silently left them while they were yet children. It was oh! so sad to think that all their little dears were out there in the cold church-yard,—although they realized, in their heart of hearts, that it was only the little bodies which now occupied that forbidding spot,—forbidding, yet made sacred by what it contained. The struggle of life had been very hard for these two; but, such was their love for each other

that it had not always seemed hard. In fact, their career was filled with sunshine much of the time, their most difficult struggle being the giving up of their little fairies.

The man's great education and love of learning and of the beautiful in all things, together with his superior talents and abilities as a leader, soon brought him into prominence; and though he had never before had any especial desire for a strenuous public career, he had been almost dragged from his quiet little country home, and taken right into the political circles. His State was then in the throes of a great crisis in her existence; and it was he who weathered the storm, though he was too modest ever to admit it.

Then the Spanish-American war came on. The man had long been in profound sympathy with the poor, starving, fighting, down-trodden Cubans; and so he was one of the first to volunteer from his State for service in Cuba. And when the order was given for the forward movement on Santiago, the man was delighted. He looked up at the flag, the most beautiful flag in all the world, and fairly swelled himself out with pride and patriotic feeling. He felt that he loved "Old Glory," that morning in Cuba, quite as well as he had ever loved anything in his life—unless it were his "Little Violet," whom he had left at home in dear old Carolina. Through the thick undergrowth of Cuba, under the burning tropical sunshine, in torrential rains, among the mosquitoes, they marched. They were, many times, quite weary, but they never thought of stopping until Santiago should be taken.

Then peace once more reigned over fair Cuba, after so many long years of fighting, and most of the American soldiers returned to their homes, satisfied with what had been accomplished by their arms. "Now," thought the man, "I

shall at last be permitted to lead a quiet life." And so in his own little "rural retreat" he found peace and contentment—but not joy. For about that time diphtheria, that ruthless scourge of little folks, came along,—taking all of his children away! It was quite a sad thing for the man; for he now knew that never again would children be allowed to gladden his home.

Home was now quite sad and lonely for the man. He had all that is ever necessary to render life comfortable, but he was no longer happy. His books, music, flowers and pictures no longer brought peace to his soul. He had long desired to write, but now he had not the incentive which is necessary for composing. He did indeed strive against it with all of his might, but to no avail. He saw how She grieved, too; but still he could not shake off the great, sad feeling of melancholy which he knew was settling over him day by day.

Ah! the weakness of human nature! He had once fancied that no trial, no trouble, no affliction, could ever be too hard for him. But alas! he knew better now: he was very weak. He had yet one more lesson to learn, and it was very hard for him to become reconciled to his loss. He did rouse himself once, and begin work on a book. He labored all summer. He even fancied that he had risen superior to his troubles at last, and for a time he was really happy. She saw it and was glad, and for a time She almost forgot her own share of their irremediable sorrow.

But one fair, dreamy, mystical day in August, when all nature seemed at peace with God and man, he collapsed. He was writing away when the summons came. He wearily laid aside his pen, and took to his bed. For many long days he was ill. He hovered between life and death many

times. Somehow, he really wanted to go, only he did not wish to leave Her. He knew that She would care, and would suffer much heart-breaking pain were he to pass away. There were others who would sincerely regret to lose the friendship of this noble , gifted man, he knew; but it was only for her that he cared now. For was it not she who ministered to him so lovingly and faithfully now, she whose fair hands soothed his aching brow? Ah! he must live yet a little longer—for her dear sake.

So one day early in November he had sufficiently recovered to be able to sit out in the piazza. It was now Indian summer and the weather was perfectly lovely. He sat and mused for a while by himself, then he called for her. She must enjoy the day with him; for it would do her good. After a while, he said, "Come, my dear, let us take a walk out in the autumn woods and fields; for I want to see some of that youthful bloom brought back to your cheeks." And now let us draw a veil over the two lovers as they roam about in the woods. Theirs was the perfect love, the love which is as pure as Heaven itself; for it he had not loved her so well, he would not now be with her. Therefore, it were a sacrilege to let the world know what they did, said and thought; that day in the autumn woods. Bye bye, "O blissful day!"

His physician had advised him to travel for a while, and so next year he and his Little Violet visited several foreign lands. They wandered abroad for two years, seeing, learning and resting. They spent a part of their time in Cuba and South America, then they took in Europe, a part of Asia, Africa, the South Sea islands, China, Japan, the Philippines, and the western states of our country. They also took a glimpse of Canada.

Then they once more found themselves at home, the dearest place in all the world to them now. He once more took up his pen, and wrote a number of great books; one after another of them followed in regular succession. They were real, live, sympathetic pen-pictures, well deserving of a place in every home. But alas! the reading public never gave him that recognition which every writer desires. A few great hearts read his books, and sympathized with the author; but the public generally was heedless of all of his devoted efforts. But he never became discouraged. The public's indifference did pain him and disappoint him greatly, although he never complained. He was advancing up into years now, too; still he was as young in spirit as ever. His half a century and ten sat lightly upon his soul.

The man began to write the story of his life and work, after which he intended to write no more. He was peculiarly fitted for such a task, as he was recognized as a superior critic, essayist, and writer on biographical subjects. For two long years he worked at his task, picturing his career, from the time he was a child, in the most wonderfully graphic and fascinating style imaginable. Everything was told; nothing was left out. It was really a heart-throbbing book, one destined to live for all future time. And the closing months of this work were very happy for the author, which happy and genial time had a most helpful influence on the book, making it close in a natural manner. At last it was finished, and the faithful scribe knelt in prayer for its success as a giver of peace.

One day, he was out among his flowers, admiring their beauty and contemplating the sweetness of all nature to a well-developed soul. He seemed to be in a dream, and was swiftly, silently moving on, in a state of perfect sublimity.

Near him, all around him, everywhere, were numbers and numbers of ethereal beings, and the air was laden with sweet perfumes and harmonious sounds.—But just then it was shrouded in gloom, and I wakened with a start. I rubbed my eyes, and looked about me. The wind still sighed and groaned through the trees and in at my south window; the air still was calm and refreshing; the sun shined on as it always shines in August; and it was just one of those typical, genuine, mystic, dreamy days which are known only when the last roses of summer begin to bloom.

Gentle reader, a close and observing nature can find much truth in this, and the following poem—"Finis."

FINIS.

(By Albert Kinross.)

My soul is shredded; I have sold
The pieces here, the pieces there;
My heart is bleeding, and the blood—
I sold it here, I sold it there.
And yet this soul it was my soul;
And yet this blood it was my blood.
Still, in the end, I have known how to brave
All disillusion, faced the best and worst;
My hunger have I stayed and slaked my thirst
In the hope ultimate, the trust in right;
In the sad mystery that lives with Death
And all the silent things that have no fear.
So is the end no passage into hells,
No dismal fumbling after sullen gods;
No marriage with delight,
No joy whose trumps sound heraldings—
But quiet, and the closing of the years.

—Harper's Monthly Magazine.

UNDER THE LAMP WITH "BEN HOPE."

THE GHOST OF ROCKY BRANCH.

Rocky Branch is a small stream somewhere in the northern part of York county. It is in a very hilly, rocky, and forbidding place. And right near this altogether lonely little creek there is an old-time dwelling which was constructed of the logs hewn out of the pine forest more than one hundred years ago. The farm is a pretty one, although it is very lonely and quiet in the summer. A great orchard of apple trees gives the place a sort of restful appearance, even though the atmosphere is at all times oppressively melancholy. The house is said to be haunted, and not many people have ever cared to occupy it,—though it is not vacant at this time. August must be a strange month to some of our natures. I know; the month in which the spirits walk abroad, if one can really believe in such things. And it was in August that I spent a week at the haunted house some years ago, therefore that might account for the strange sounds which I heard, the queer things which I saw, while I was at Rocky Branch. Yet, it is true that I often heard the sounds of footsteps, and one morning I actually saw a man pass by in a brown coat! I was sot afraid; and so certain would I be that it was some one coming in that I never once thought of ascribing the noises to the walking of spirits from spirit land. Neither did I believe that the man which I saw was anything but a man. And, yet, the strangest thing about it all was that I had never been able to explain it Sometimes I would be sitting in the house, quite alone, when I would hear those footsteps. But look as I might, not one could I see. Everything would be as "still as still can be." Somewhere, a July fly might happen to be singing, out in the apple tree; but not a human being would be in my sight! And so I would just quietly settle down

to my work once more. One rainy morning I saw the man hasten by. He wore a brown, faded coat, and walked with a stoop. I never saw him again. And at night, all was quiet; my spirit friends never seemed to travel then. They preferred the daylight for their mysterious doings.

One day I told my experience at Rocky Branch to old Mrs. Martin, who possessed some belief in the existence, on earth, of supernatural beings. And when I came to that part of my story which tells of my having actually seen the ghost, she said, "Yes, you saw the ghost of Rocky Branch. That old house is haunted, and it is a wonder that anybody ever lives in it." Then she paused.

"But," said I, wishing to draw her out, "you know some people do not believe in such things?" She sat silent for a while. She seemed to be thinking about something. "She does not want to talk," I thought. But at length I said: "Please tell me why you believe in ghosts and haunts and spirit; you know I just love a good ghost story." Then I paused for a while.

"Well, it's a long, long story, but I'll tell you," she began. Mrs. Martin was an excellent story-teller, and so I delighted to have her thus humor my whims. She possessed fine powers of narration; and this, with her imaginative nature, made her stories peculiarly interesting and entertaining.

"When I was yet very small my parents both died, and I was left alone and almost friendless, in the world. I had only one uncle, who lived in the house on Rocky Branch. He was a sour, crusty old thing, and nearly everybody was afraid of him. Even his wife, a gentle old soul, and his two daughters were afraid of him, and always tried to do what they could to please him—though they didn't succeed

in doing it all the time. And such had been the fierceness of the old man's temper that it had driven his only son away from home while still in his teens. They never heard from the boy from that day to this. They supposed him to be somewhere in the West, but they didn't know. And so it was to this sort of an abode I was taken when I was scarcely more than a baby. My old uncle treated me very well, although I never did become altogether accustomed to him and his queer ways. Somehow, I was really very much afraid of him. My aunt and cousins were, however, kindness itself; and I can never forget them. The girls were really quite beautiful and talented, and many a time have they lulled me to sleep with their sweet singing. And my aunt could not have been any better if she had tried. She it was who was the ever-present help in the times of her husband's fierce eruptions of temper; and many a lick was kept off the backs of the poor suffering negroes by the gentle hand and wise influence.

"The old man had vowed that his daughters should never marry, and so he would not allow any boys to come to his home. For some queer reason of his own, he had determined that his two daughters should always remain at home, and conduct his farm just as he did, with the assistance of their faithful slaves, after he was no more on earth. He would have his own way, too.

"But, contrary to my uncle's wishes and in spite of all that he could do, a certain young man fell in love with one of the girls. He was, I believe, one of the most charming and handsomest fellows I ever saw; and it was only natural that a girl of Alice Knox's gentle, loving nature should return the affection. In fact, I believe that she loved Marion Lacy almost in spite of herself, even;—for she really did

not wish to become estranged from her father. But, as every one knows, love laughs at reason, throws prudence to the winds, calls common sense a mockery, and stops at nothing short of such insuperable difficulties as physical impossibilities sometimes prove themselves to be. Therefore Marion and Alice secretly exchanged letters for some time, and occasionally they would meet and have little tete-a-tetes all to themselves. And thus it came about that they were engaged ere my uncle was aware of anything at all.

"Alice pondered long and thoughtfully. She considered the question from every point of view. At last she came to the decision that her whole future happiness depended upon—entered upon—Marion Lacy. So she went to her father one morning and informed him of her past doings, ending her little story by quietly saying, 'We are to be married at Ramah on next Wednesday, at the parsonage!'

"The old man was speechless with rage. He had never before been trifled with in this manner, and of course he would not submit to it now. When he had sufficiently recovered as to be able to speak, he informed his daughter that she should never marry that man—or any other.

"So the day appointed for the wedding arrived. That morning, Alice made preparations to leave her dear old home—dearer than ever to her, now that she was leaving it forevermore. The gloom of inexpressible sorrow pervaded the whole place, and the very air was filled with grief The dumb creatures, even, were quieter than usual; and I have thought since that both good and evil spirits must have been near—striving for the mastery. A tragedy of the deepest nature was imminent.

"They, however, assembled at the breakfast table, being later than usual. Nobody wanted anything to eat: they

came to the table merely from force of habit. After asking the customary blessing, my uncle said, 'You remember what I have said, Alice, and all of you?' Then I slipped down from my chair and ran away into the garden.

"Ere long the young man drove up, and stopped his vehicle at the front gate. Then Alice went out and seated herself beside him. They drove rapidly away, a look of intense happiness being on the young fellow's face. But my uncle—where was he? Nobody knew.

"By and by the parsonage was reached, and the young people entered hand in hand. The old parson met them at the door, informing them that some one wished to speak to them before they should proceed any further. Then Mr. Knox presented himself. He said, 'You two do not marry to-day.' With that he reached for his daughter, and started to the door. Being a powerful man physically, it was no trouble for him to fell the young man with a blow that rendered him insensible. Then, in spite of her protests and all, he placed her in his carriage and proceeded rapidly homeward.

"When the young man had sufficiently recovered as to regain full possession of his faculties, he determined to have the fair Alice at any hazard. But alas! he could, he found, do absolutely nothing toward carrying out his determination;—for he never saw Alice again! She was taken away, one night, to another neighborhood. Her father, foolish man! thought that new surroundings and her being among other people would induce her to forget 'her mad passion,' as he called it.

"But not so. Alice never returned home any more. She was so nearly heart-broken that a sudden illness soon brought her to her grave.

"Then it was the old man's turn to suffer. He now saw how foolish he had been; and how cruel, and hard, and severe. He remembered the many times that he had impatiently thrown the pleadings of the Gentle Spirit aside, and now his soul was overwhelmed with remorse. Never again was he the same man. And when he passed away, it was in a state of unrest—though the old parson assured us that all was well with his soul.

"One day an old-time negro woman said that she had seen her old 'Marse' walking over the ground the night before. My aunt did not believe it, and bade her never to tell it again.

"But, nevertheless, the old negro really did believe that it was so, and said that we would all be convinced of it some time. And we were.

"The years came and went. Changes rapidly made their advent into our home, now that the chain of the old monotonous routine had been broken at last. I soon became a grown woman, and decided to go out into the world and labor for myself. My aunt passed away soon afterward, the remaining person found a home of her own, and so the old place was left vacant. The war having become a thing of the past, the negroes also left. They vowed that they would never live at 'de ha'nted house' any more. They didn't.

"One day, many years since all of this occurred, I wandered back to Rocky Branch. My husband was no more, and somehow I was very home-sick and lonely. For though I had traveled far and seen much, I had never ceased to love the old home and its melancholy associations. It was in the late summer when I returned, and the air was soft and still. The 'dry-fly' sang his last tune in the old

apple tree near the moss-grown, old-time well; a few flowers still bloomed in the old garden; and the buildings were in ruins. I sat down under one of the apple trees, and fell to musing. I do not know how long I sat thus; as I took no note of time. After a while I saw a man coming up the path. He was dressed in a suit of brown, home-made jeans, and walked with a slight stoop. He came up to me without speaking, or making any other sign whatever that he saw me, and sat down on a rock near by. I could not at first see who it was, but when he at last looked toward me I saw —my uncle! I was frightened nearly out my senses until he spoke to me, just as he always used to do. The voice was the same except that it was not so harsh, grating and severe. He said, 'Ellen, I am the ghost of Rocky Branch; and I am fated to haunt this place, at certain times, for all future time. This is my great punishment.' Then he vanished out of my sight."

I sat in a thoughtful mood for some time after Mrs. Martin had told her story. It was a good story, I thought; although I did not believe it. She told it for the literal truth, however; and so I did not attempt to tell her my views on the subject of ghosts. I could not have, by any means, convinced her that ghosts exist only in the imaginations of some—perhaps a great number—persons. But anything of a mystical nature always appeals to humanity, and so we will ever love and tell and delight in such stories. And allow us to advise you all, gentle readers, that a ghost story never loses anything in the telling. Imagination is a most wonderful thing, and it can at times give out strange stories. Even the author's private opinion, publicly expressed, is that a story is nothing but a story; and that if we did not have it with us in our times of loneliness we

could hardly spend the time as pleasantly as we do. And what would a writer do without some imagination? Echo answers, "Yes; what would he do? He would do nothing."

I believe that, as the Author of our being, God has intended us to be free. He has never allowed us to be slaves to anything whatever. His Word is before us, in an open book, and invites, challenges, demands investigation. And as to doubts, fears, signs, old folk-lore tales, etc., I have only this to say: They exist as a natural consequence of man's wickedness, and are here to seduce us from the path of right and truth. They exist as the agents of the Prince of Evil, and are ever present to do his bidding. They are here for a great and good purpose at last, and exist mainly as a warning for the benefit of all who wish to be free. And thus it comes about that good triumphs over evil in every instance. If man were only as thoughtful as he ought to be, this would be a fine old world in every respect.

The secret of true and lasting happiness is very, very near. It is everywhere; yet it is nowhere. It is near, and yet far off. It exists only for those who wish to find it.

These stories stand written as stories—and nothing else. They are true in some cases, but all of them have a great deal of imaginary work to them. In the last chapter, each one of them will have proper mention and explanation. Nothing that is really in place shall be left out; for I wish to be understood. Hard to believe as it might seem, there are many people who possess no understanding. Even the simplest of things are "hard knots" to them. But they have my sympathy, and I wish to explain to them the mysteries of the art of writing stories. I wish to be solid along all lines. And if there is anything in this book that does injustice to any one, I shall deplore it. That I have

drawn my characters from real life I do not deny. I could not resist the temptation to sketch some of the fair girls who have encouraged me.

THE AUTHOR'S POSTCRIPT.

It is finished. The work over which I have labored for several months is now finished. It lies near my hand, and I now take up my pen for the "home run," as it were. The labor has been long, hard, and exhaustive. Many times I have been tempted, cruelly tempted, to give it up. But I didn't. Just now, as these lines are being penned, I am quite alone. I am writing away, though ever and anon I pause for thoughtful, prayerful consideration. Could all of my readers see my inner life, know my real thoughts, understand my mind just as it really is, I am certain that they would then treat me with the kindness and consideration which are justly mine, yours, everybody's. I stand at the abrupt, naked result of many days of incessant labor, and a strange, vague, far-away fear takes possession of my being. Somehow I am afraid that I and my work may not be understood properly, that in my drawing of characters I have been rather too true to real life, that somewhere in my book I have not been just to every one, that there will in turn be those who will not be just to me in their estimate of my work, and that in the end many will not regard me at all. But yet I know that these are all just the remotest of troubles to be feared, therefore I have decided to publish the book, just as it is written,—regardless of everything. When I ponder it all long and thoughtfully, and with prayer, my heart of hearts tells me that I am right, that I have done injustice to no person, and that

man's higher nature approves my way of looking at life. In my sketching of characters, scenes, incidents, etc., I have followed an honorable course, I have been charitable, I have at least striven very hard to be just. And while I can understand how many readers will not see it as I see it, still I can also say that I was aware of this phase of human nature long before I had ever written the first page of the book. So, gentle readers, you needn't think you can give me a surprise along that line, for I have thought it all over very seriously.

Foreword.—Please read the Foreword very carefully. I make this request of my readers for this especial reason, to wit: After writing and studying very hard, and under difficulties and amidst discouragements peculiar to my own surroundings, the fear has seized me that she, of whom I was thinking, and who has been the inspirer of all my most heart-feeling, soul-stirring writings, might perhaps feel that she has been imposed upon. I wrote the Foreword, dedicated it to her memory, and filed it away in my private papers. One day, several months afterward, I took it out, copied it for this work,—and omitted all of it that related to, or was of interest merely to, the author. That, in short, is the history of the Foreword. Therefore, my dear little friend, please be tolerant of me. When you have read this book, in the privacy of your own room, please be so kind as to forgive all the embarrassment that one poor fellow has given you, and think only of the good that your little, unselfish, and sincere life has done the author. So far as I am now concerned, the episodes of my former days are a closed chapter, and I prefer to think only of pleasant things. I of course do not wish to harbor unpleasant memories,—and isn't it a fact that one's

most unpleasant memories are those which bring his own little misdeeds ever before him? Gentle reader, please believe that I speak the solemn truth when I say that I know I shall be the sufferer for anything of an unpleasant nature that any of my writings may stir up. Yet, no harm has been done by this book. The simple truth of the whole matter is this: I have just lived and made the material for these stories. That I have been in love, I do not deny: it is a monument of honor to me as a human being. Ah! I am proud of the fact that I have loved, loved truly and devotedly. I make this declaration before God and man. And should any remark or act of mine ever cause the blush of shame to come to any one's face, I shall deplore it as long as I live. I have written the foregoing stories, essays, and sketches in a sincere spirit. From the bottom of my poor heart, I have believed that I was following the better, higher, truer, nobler path. Not one phase of my work have I failed to give serious consideration. And how can I help it if there do happen to be unjust critics? I forgive them all.

"Dreamy-Eyes."—This story needs no further explanation. It is a true sketch from real life, drawn with ornaments of my own composing.

The Guitarist.—She lives somewhere in Cherokee county, and is no doubt one of my many enthusiastic and admiring readers.

"Dreaming."—This is just a sort of reverie, written one rainy day last winter. For a great many days I had been in the very depths of despair, and the composing of it and of the preceding articles was the first act of my own that seemed to bring peace to my troubled soul. Somehow, when I began to write these stories, a great and glorious

calm seemed to settle over me, and I feel that it will never leave. Several times since, I have been in the depths; but never again shall I feel as I felt last winter when I almost despaired. Resignation, absolute and complete, is mine this calm August day; and I am eagerly pressing forward to the goal of my ambition, confident in the belief that I shall always be guided and directed by an ever-loving, kindly, patient, long-suffering Father.

At Twenty-three.—After Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Tom Watson. In transcribing this article, I omitted the last paragraph. And right here permit me to pay a fitting tribute to one of whom I have hitherto said very little in my writings. I allude to my mother. For twenty-three long years, she has lived a life of devotion to me. Several of my friends playfully accuse me of being a ladies' man, of being very much in love with several pretty girls, and of really being love-sick. But I know that after all is said, thought and done, I can really and truthfully say that I have never been as crazy as I have often seemed to be. The real truth is this: I am a ladies' man, a lover to the manner born; I have been love-sick, jealous, off my head, and all that sort of thing, many times in my life; but never at any time have I ever entertained any deeper sentiments for any one than I have for my own dear, gentle, patient, noble mother. Gentle readers, this is the solemn truth.

In the "Seas of Memory."—This is a short essay, and was penned one day while I was awaiting the R. F. D. man's arrival

My Ideals.—There was some hesitation, on my part, about publishing this article. Somehow or other, I was at first fearful that it would not make just the proper impression. Nevertheless, I did at last permit it to stand as writ-

ten. Discerning readers can at once see that it is only a boyish composition, written by a boy who has seen none of the world. One of my recently made patrons, a prominent citizen of Yorkville, encourages me to go on in my own way. He says, "Now, Love, let me advise you to publish your stories. Write for the amusement of the younger people, and success will certainly be yours." Ah! gentle reader, the ideal woman, the ideal girl are realities. In my quiet, lonely life I've had reason to know this to be true. I could do nothing more, therefore I deliberately selected the little girl for my own incentive, as it were; and thereon will rest my fame as an author. Reading romantic stories has filled me to the brim with sentiment, and I really hope to be a lover of beauty, tenderness, and sentiment as long as I live. Life will be made the easier for me by having done so, and I think not one will ever raise any objections..

My Heart's Desire.—The reader knows at once what was in the author's mind when he wrote this article. But no matter what it might suggest to the minds of its readers, in the years to come I hope that I shall not have occasion to regret having penned this sketch. I have written just what I felt.

My Aching Void.—This article needs no comment. I will, however, say I have not done violence to the truth of any emotion, or feeling whatever, by writing it.

The Fire.—A true story, excepting the author's style of telling it, which is rather magnifying in some particulars.

"Richard."—Another true story.

"Brown-Eyes."—This is although an imaginary story, written after the style of Charles Dickens in some of his writings. The character is drawn from real life, but the

story is in no sense of the word true. I make this statement in justice to myself and to those who know me personally and intimately. Read it just for what it is—a story.

Fragments.—What will my readers think on reading this chapter? Yes; just what will they think? I know not—neither do I care. I could not resist the desire to publish it. The name tells what it is—the fragments, or remains, of a love story. I at one time had no notion of ever publishing it; but as time moved on, things changed sufficiently to enable me to see my way clear in publishing the last part of it. And it does not, I sincerely believe do injustice to anybody who has been associated with me. Some of it is true—but I won't say how much. You know, we authors are a privileged set; that is, we take liberties. We just cannot help writing about those things which please us. I destroyed the greater part of the story about Lillian, and so it will never be read by the general public. I wrote it for my own amusement. Of course, if I had not fancied myself very much in love, I could not have written just as I have written. Nevertheless, I do not feel that I did wrong. Surely not one person of reasonable intelligence will ever wish to deny me the pleasure of building air castles around the pretty girls? No person living has a more profound respect for womanhood than I. No one ever was more self-reliant, in a certain way, than I. The truth of the whole matter is this: Not one could ever think less about these little stories than the author thinks, once they have been committed to paper. So please, my dear readers, do not think too seriously about me. I want your sympathy and encouragement and assistance; but pray don't consider me an object of pity. I've got a lot of pride and "grit," you know; and since I could do nothing else, I've decided

to write for a living. I love those who have assisted me, with a devotion that will last as long as I live. And when I think over all the little times I have had with them, with my kind friends, I am filled with gratitude. Ah me! I could hardly resist the impulse to give my friends a prominent place in this work. Loyalty to principle is a noble thing,—and of course I desire to be loyal, devoted and true. And now I am nearing the end. I have labored all summer, and the work has been hard. Therefore, if it should happen that I have written anything of an immodest nature in the opinion of my readers, the punishment (if it incur punishment) will be mine, and not any one else's. Read "Fragments" just as you would read any other story.

The two stories which close this volume are purely imaginary And now that every one knows, or at least should by this time know, that this book has been written for entertainment and revenue, it would seem that nothing further remains to be said in explanation thereof. I wish to express my thanks to every one of my readers for having read this book. I thank you all; from the depths of my heart, I thank you all. When the closing lines of this book are being penned, this bright September day, somehow a feeling of intense loneliness comes over me. Tom Watson says that it is always so with one when he completes a work over which he has labored for a long time. But farewell! kind friends; I am sorry to leave you, but I really must go now I've already tarried too long with you, I fear; yet I just could not depart without telling you why and how I came to write these stories. Next year, I shall write the second volume of "Under the Lamp." I can do nothing else, therefore I have determined to earn a competence by writing books. The photo for this volume was made by Mr. W. L. Latham.

THE END.

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